

TEMPORALITY AND MEDIALITY
IN LATE MEDIEVAL AND
EARLY MODERN CULTURE

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TEMPORALITY AND MEDIALITY
IN LATE MEDIEVAL AND
EARLY MODERN CULTURE

Edited by

Christian Kiening
and Martina Stercken



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INTRODUCTION

Christian Kiening and Martina Stercken

Time and Temporality

Few subjects have raised such numerous and heated discussions as the matter of time. In pre-Socratic philosophy, notions of mutability and immutability already existed side by side. With Plato and Aristotle, the discussion became more explicit: whereas the one relates time to the eternity of the cosmos and situates it in the realm of ideas, the other postulates an inseparable connection between time, motion, and change. In the modern era, with time moving into the centre of theoretical reflection, the divergences intensified. In philosophy, vivid controversies arose about whether time existed or not, whether it came into being or not, and whether it was real or constructed. In physics, the theory of relativity replaced the Newtonian concept of absolute and uniform time with the idea of a space-time dependent upon the observer's state of motion. This, however, was just the beginning of a discussion on continuity and variability, measurability and determinability. It became evident that different systems are associated with different temporalities: while subatomic space may contain particles that cannot be fixed in terms of time, living systems seem to possess multifarious forms of intrinsic temporalities.¹

* The contributors of this volume are grateful to several translators for their support, particularly Nicola Barefoot and Jake Fraser.

¹ Cf. Zimmerli and Sandbothe, *Klassiker der modernen Zeitphilosophie*; Oaklander, *The Philosophy of Time*; Birx, *Encyclopedia of Time*.

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From a historical perspective, time is per se not a unity but a multitude, a *plurale tantum*, related to different cultures, groups and individuals, different phases and moments.² Time appears in the form of multiple temporalities, which, on a semantic, logical, and pragmatic level, are inherent in all kinds of cultural productions.³ This, however, does not classify time as a merely subjective phenomenon, a mental construct necessary to deal with the complexity of the world. Though Immanuel Kant suggests that time (as well as space) is a projection of the mind, a way of apprehending phenomena, in his view we have no direct perception of it as a universal dimension shared by all humans. Time, therefore, in its abstract sense, is more than just the sum of all temporally related phenomena: it represents the universal principle or transcendent origin of what forms, at least in Western cultures, the basic structure of past, present, and future. However, time can only be grasped in its interconnections with temporalities and via representations, signs, and media, all of them establishing complex relationships between temporality and mediality. The complexity of these relationships is due to a reciprocal mode of implication: whereas, on the one hand, time has to be mediated; on the other hand, media themselves comprise temporal structures — if only by bringing this or that moment to mind while ignoring or deferring others.⁴

Taking this perspective should pave the way for a different history of (concepts of) time. This history would no longer be centred on a primarily philosophical understanding of certain key concepts, such as the Aristotelian, Augustinian, and Newtonian models mentioned above. Nor would it be based on the well-known master narratives: the transformation, for example, of the cyclical notion of time (antiquity) into first a Christian, linear concept (Middle Ages), then a mechanical-uniform one (early modern period).⁵ It would not take the easy shortcut of explaining the change from the medieval to the modern world by referring to the pattern of technological revolution.⁶ It has been suggested that a monastic, ecclesiastical attitude closely relating time to salvation history has been superseded in this period by an urban, mercantile one, marked by the spread of mechanical clocks and a new emphasis on individual

² Elias, *Über die Zeit*; Burke, 'Reflections on the Cultural History of Time'; Hunt, *Measuring Time, Making History*.

³ West-Pavlov, *Temporalities*.

⁴ Cf. Beck, *Medien und die soziale Konstruktion von Zeit*; Sandbothe and Zimmerli, *Zeit – Medien – Wahrnehmung*; Großklaus, *Medien-Zeit, Medien-Raum*.

⁵ Wendorff, *Zeit und Kultur*; Aveni, *Empires of Time*.

⁶ Mumford, *The Myth of the Machine*; Dohrn-van Rossum, *Die Geschichte der Stunde*.

and private time management.⁷ Though this may be the case, this process only represents one aspect of a multi-stranded history of time, unfolding in more and more complex entanglements of temporal and medial dimensions.

Time and Mediality

The new perspective on time implies several shifts: from time in the singular to temporalities in the plural, from mental concepts to cultural practices, from techniques to mediality, and from macro- to microhistory. If we no longer aim to reconstruct the overall attitude of a whole era, we can not only take into account the multitude of concrete forms dealing with issues of time, but also develop clearer ideas of the way the medial structure of these forms works, and of the complexity of the processes they set in motion.

This is what the present volume seeks to do. It does not focus on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the era usually associated with major changes in the conception of time — a new exactitude of measuring, a temporalization of history, a shifting of attention towards the present and the future.⁸ The focus is on the period around 1500, during which dealing with time and temporality became crucial, without leading, however, to a universal, theoretically grounded new concept.⁹ Several developments can be observed: a growing importance of methods of time measurement;¹⁰ a new view of the present as a turning point in history, and a rigorous time management, especially in Reformed groups;¹¹ a reappearance of ancient or pre-Christian concepts of time; and a new sense of historicity as well as anachronism.¹² Time is considered a multifaceted complex, transgressing the Aristotelian model of motion and involving growing divergences between universal and individual, religious and secular time.¹³ An intensified discussion takes place about what is con-

⁷ Le Goff, 'Au moyen Âge'.

⁸ Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft* and *Zeitschichten: Studien zur Historik*. For a critical perspective, see: Seifert, "Verzeitlichung"; Luhmann, 'Temporalisierung von Komplexität'; Hölscher, *Die Entdeckung der Zukunft*; Grafton and Rosenberg, *Cartographies of Time*; De Padova, *Leibniz, Newton und die Erfindung der Zeit*; Landwehr, *Geburt der Gegenwart*.

⁹ Ehlert, *Zeitkonzeptionen, Zeiterfahrung, Zeitmessung*.

¹⁰ Cf. Dohrn-van Rossum, *Die Geschichte der Stunde*.

¹¹ Smolinsky, *Deutungen der Zeit im Streit der Konfessionen*; DeCook, 'Temporality and the Media of Revelation'; Sandl, *Medialität und Ereignis*; Engammare, *L'ordre du temps*.

¹² Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*.

¹³ Blumenberg, *Lebenszeit und Weltzeit*; Bellenger, *Le temps et la durée*; Schuhmann, 'Zur

sidered 'old' and 'new'.¹⁴ Aesthetic experience tries to probe the performative dynamics of time: while literary texts experiment with the facets of temporal semantics,¹⁵ and the cosmographic tradition explores new ways of interweaving time and space,¹⁶ the arts establish new models of representing time as a general as well as a particular concept (*kairos, occasio*).¹⁷

What becomes evident in these contexts is an intrusion of temporal aspects into everyday life and thinking, and at the same time a pluralization of time. This is manifested in both the theoretical attempts to define time and in the increasingly different attitudes developed by various social and religious groups.¹⁸ But what is also evident is the general effort to make time palpable and temporalities tangible. This is where media and mediation come into play. To struggle with the representation of time also means to form and cultivate the means of representation. A double relationship between temporalities and mediality therefore emerges. On the one hand, media influence the perception of time: The new forms of print, for example, accelerate communication and promote situations of tension between tradition and innovation. On the other hand, media themselves transport temporal aspects: for example, when texts and images display medial dimensions, they always relate them to time and space. Conversely, when temporal dimensions are emphasized, specific media are always used to represent time.¹⁹

The present volume endeavours to bring together significant examples from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in which time and mediality are entan-

Entstehung des neuzeitlichen Zeitbegriffs'; Kessler, 'Zeitverständnisse in der Philosophie der Renaissance'.

¹⁴ Müller, "Alt" und "neu" in der Epochenenerfahrung um 1500'; Haug and Wachinger, *Innovation und Originalität*.

¹⁵ Glasser, *Studien zur Geschichte des französischen Zeitbegriffs*; Quinones, *The Renaissance Discovery of Time*; Joukovsky, *Montaigne et le problème du temps*; Bellenger, *Le temps et la durée*; Pintarič, *Le sentiment du temps*; Mohsen, *Time and the Calendar*; Lacore-Martin, *Figures de l'histoire et du temps*; Meyers, 'Telling Time'; Smyth, *Imaginations of Time*; Benz and Kiening, 'Die Zeit des Ichs'.

¹⁶ Edson, *Mapping Time and Space*; Serchuk, 'Cartes et Chroniques'; Stercken, 'Kartographie und Chronistik'; Stercken, 'Kartographie – Historiographie'.

¹⁷ Cohen, *Transformations of Time and Temporality*; see also Moxey, *Visual Time*.

¹⁸ Schreiner, "Diversitas temporum"; Thomas, *Vergangenheit, Zukunft, Lebensalter*; Brendecke, Fuchs, and Koller, *Die Autorität der Zeit in der Frühen Neuzeit*; Landwehr, *Frühe Neue Zeiten*.

¹⁹ Cf. Kiening, Prica, and Wirz, *Wiederkehr und Verheißung*. Czock and Rathmann-Lutz, *Zeitenwelten*.

gled. Eight contributions from different fields look at how, in various situations, time was mediated and medialized, and how media transported temporalities and represented time. They explore different configurations of time and temporality: (1) mosaics of tesserae in church architecture, offering deliberate forms of temporality at a time when central perspective was being introduced in architectural design; (2) artistic explorations of triptychs as time machines, reflecting upon the interrelation of time and folded space and evoking older traditions of tacit knowledge; (3) a winged altarpiece in which the pictures on display could be changed to match the liturgical seasons, leaving the beholder suspended between present, repetitive and eternal time; (4) a travel account from a journey to Jerusalem, offering an imaginary movement through space, which shifts between divergent moments of history and gives readers who have not made the journey the chance to imagine the Passion of Christ; (5) a map prized as the incarnation of modernity, which still embodies medieval modes of time stratification and established ways of embedding past, present and future; (6) a compendium of world history and cosmography, which leads its readers through multiple forms of time and temporality, jumping forwards and backwards, accelerating, stopping and contemplating times; (7) the figuration of prophecy as an example of the mediation of time between tradition and innovation, not claiming that the future is immutable, but rather emphasizing the fact that events are constituted by being 'in-between'; (8) an illustrated novel, presenting dream visions removed from any specific temporality, and at the same time reflecting the architectural theory of earlier times.

As diverse as these explorations into medial constellations around 1500 are, they stand on a common methodological ground. They share, first, the belief that time should be regarded not as a mere abstract concept but as something intrinsic to the idea of tradition as well as transcending it, something perceived as well as created, something implied as well as displayed. Furthermore, they agree that mediation should not be restricted to media in the traditional, technical sense but should be considered in terms of the full range of forms of communication: material and immaterial, textual and visual, old and new. A third point of contact between the different contributions concerns the question of reflexivity: by not clinging to explicit theories of time or mediation, but analysing the theoretical potential inherent in the texts, images, maps, and sculptures, the authors are able to observe various degrees of reflection on time and space, time and temporality, and temporal change. They reveal the range of internal and external conditions that give rise to a 'medium of time', and expose some of the hidden historical knowledge about how communication works, how meaning is created, and how something invisible, such as time, can become visible.

Complexities and Hybridities

The result can obviously not be a comprehensive picture of how time was perceived and conceived at the so-called threshold between the Middle Ages and the early modern period.²⁰ It can, however, reveal how texts, images, maps, sculptures, mosaics, and other artefacts operate as deliberate carriers of time and temporality. Each of these, in its own way, uses temporal indices referring to different moments of the past, present, and future, and to different aspects of tradition. Historiographical texts, for example, attempt to grasp the past displaying the mediality of time and at the same time the temporality of media. Triptychs visualize concepts of folded space and time, and act as nodes of historical and liturgical temporalities. In the Byzantine culture, mosaics form part of the idea that sacred spaces unite the past, present, and future, and that gold and light signalize a sphere beyond time.

These and the other examples examined in this volume indicate that there are parts of tradition that are directly linked to concepts of time and temporality, such as historiography, shutters and altar wings, golden tesserae, or prophets, authorities, genealogies, and ruins. Yet these concepts are complex and most often occur in specific media forms. Prophecies in the late Middle Ages and the age of Reformation not only appear as medial figurations in texts and images, partially interrelated and shaped by models, but also reflect on their own medial constitution, referring to medial relations, such as those existing between stars and the world, scriptures and events. Late medieval and early modern world maps seem to present an even better example of the complexity of medial constellations in which time and temporality are conceived: Always defined as a framed entity, they form part of the written and the pictorial tradition — as part of a book or as an image conceived for a broader public — and thus offer different ways of describing the space of history within the framework of God's creation. At the same time, the written and pictorial elements incorporated in the map can refer to salvation history as well as to historical events, often quoting older authorities or pointing to well-known narratives beyond the cartographical record.

What we can observe here is a hybridization of the forms and media of temporality, that is, not just a juxtaposition or a mixture of two or three different concepts, but an interweaving of various conceptual, thematic, performative, and medial aspects in the same form — a new pluralism of dimensions, still

²⁰ Kiening, *Schwierige Modernität*; Kiening, 'Zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit?'; see also Haug, *Mittelalter und frühe Neuzeit*.

rooted in authoritative traditions, which, however, can no longer be completely harmonized. For many centuries, the idea of time had been determined, at least for intellectuals, by the Christian perspective, in which time was viewed in the context of a highly differentiated symbolic system. The natural, cyclical dimension of the days and the month, the seasons and the year had been reshaped by liturgical and heortological structures; the open progress of time had come to be viewed in terms of a teleologically set structure of past, present, and future; the contingencies of history had been sublated in the universal finality of salvation history.²¹ Time, in this sense, is conceived of as basically paradoxical — not only because it is elusive and ungraspable (an idea central for Augustine and, later on, for the modern era), but because it is temporal and supratemporal at the same time. Derived from eternity, time is also its opposite — as long as the dichotomy between time and eternity is not overcome.²²

This complex of ideas, centred on notions of salvation history, remains a benchmark for most concepts of time and temporality in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. And yet — if appearances are to be believed — it loses its undisputed dominance during this period. Tension arises between the perspective of *sub specie aeternitatis* and that of *sub specie temporis*. Aspects of salvific time appear more and more interwoven with other (profane, scientific, numerical, individual) timelines, timescapes, and time regimes. So even in genres that seem firmly grounded in salvation history, such as travel literature related to the Holy Land, pluralizations cannot be overlooked. While documenting a journey that has actually taken place, the texts simultaneously create experiences for those not travelling; they therefore oscillate between proximity and distance, here and there, now and then, between the factual time of the journey, the multiple historical temporalities present in the Holy Land, and the soteriological (supra-)temporality of the indulgences connected to the different holy places. Other texts and images put aside the Christian logics of time and eternity, history and sublation by turning back to ancient or non-linear concepts of temporality. The rhetoric of rebirth and return implies a different model of the passage of time.²³ The fascination with ruins plays with the idea that the remains of

²¹ Cf. Gurevich, *Categories of Medieval Culture*; Borst, *Computus: Zeit und Zahl in der Geschichte Europas*; Goetz, 'Zeitbewußtsein und Zeitkonzeptionen'; Pérez Higuera, *The Art of Time*.

²² Cf. Dales, *Medieval Discussions of the Eternity of the World*; Porro, *The Medieval Concept of Time*; Jaritz and Moreno-Riaño, *Time and Eternity*; Fox, *Time and Eternity in Mid-Thirteenth-Century Thought*; Kiening, *Literarische Schöpfung im Mittelalter*.

²³ Levin, *The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance*.

older eras can be present in later ones, creating a discontinuous space and giving the impression that it might be possible to observe the work of time itself.²⁴ The famous *Hypnerotomachia Poliphii* (1499) seeks to discover the secret of human life, presenting a dream vision of a utopia, in which time is mediated by ruins, showing in a lingering way how history manifests itself in the relation between past and future.

A closer look into the tradition around 1500 reveals multiple ways of dealing with time, which refer to different situations of perception and different purposes. Books, for example, can be laid out in a way that allows readers to learn at their own individual pace. The *Rudimentum Novitiorum* (1475), a didactic compendium of world history and cosmography, provides graphics, lists, and registers in addition to the text, and gives visual form to differing temporal registers, which allow the reader to work through all the subject matter at varying speeds. In other cases, time appears to be not so much dynamized as compressed: early Dutch paintings show the attempt to overcome death by epitaphs and portraits, oscillating between devotional imagination and an anticipation of eternity. Triptychs condense time by allowing the donor's likeness to hover, together with the sacred figures, in a secluded holy space.

Although texts, images, maps, sculptures, mosaics, and other artefacts apparently use different means to conceive time, they all envisage a strong connection between time and space. Linked in manifold ways, spatiality like temporality is present both in the inherent dimensions of the artefacts and the historical situations they are embedded in. How complex the entanglement of spatiality and temporality is can be grasped by looking at maps, which use a pictorial layout and an arrangement of written elements not only to conceive spatial unities but also to evoke temporal dimensions. World maps such as Gerhard Mercator's achieve a new kind of image of the world by merging cartographical techniques developed around 1300 with more recent and mathematical ways of producing space according to Ptolemy's geography, while at the same time claiming to be useful for contemporary travellers. Here time is still incorporated the maps' pictorial layout, which refers to earlier ways of intertwining scholarly knowledge of the world's geographical features with the message of salvation. Moreover, strategies to locate historical events on the map's space are adopted from the medieval tradition but positioned with an obvious concern for geographical precision.

²⁴ Forero-Mendoza, *Le temps des ruines*.

Another significant example of ways of interlacing time and space is given by the traditions and practices mediating the Passion of Christ. Reports of pilgrimages to the Holy Land, for example, link salvation history to the temporality and the spatiality of human subjects, and to the temporal structure and the spatial movement of the pilgrims. Hans Tucher from Nuremberg, to name just one of them, organized his text mainly according to the topography of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, dividing the events of the Passion into distinct spatial stations, where Christ's presence, his wonders, and his death can be envisioned. By accentuating the processional and processual character of moving from station to station, he created a paradigmatic concentration of time and space apt both to represent his own experience and to enable the experience of others via reading or meditation. Finally, triptychs, displayed in churches, offer a particular model for linking time and space: on the one hand, the carved or painted scenes from the Bible or the saints' lives are conceived as self-contained settings, which spatialize narratives in order to make the holy present and to condense or stretch time; on the other hand, their location enables them to deploy agency within the framework of the church interiors, allowing the visitor to synchronize the individual lifetime on earth with eternity.

Historiographic Perspective

Looking at the multiple ways in which time and temporality were mediated in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries promises to produce fresh ideas, not only on the ways time and media are connected but also on the ways the historical profile of an era of transition can be grasped: not by assuming a major caesura or emphasizing contemporaries' attitudes towards the 'old' and the 'new', but by scrutinizing the actual practices used to shape and negotiate issues of time and temporality. It becomes clear that traditional forms of writing, painting, and design can gain a new impact, playing for example with models of salvation history (now related to individual experiences or new spaces). The fluidity of late medieval and early modern culture is shown not only from a bird's eye view, as a tension between new discoveries and old texts, innovations and traditions, the emergence of plurality and the adherence to authority.²⁵ It is also manifested in the texture of the artefacts and media: in the way they oscillate between claims to modernity and references to tradition. In Venice, for example, in St Mark's

²⁵ Cf. Grafton, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts*; Brendecke, Fuchs, and Koller, *Die Autorität der Zeit in der Frühen Neuzeit*; Müller, Oesterreicher, and Vollhardt, *Pluralisierungen*.

unbroken tradition of mosaics, a modern conception of the image intrudes, incompatible with tradition but nevertheless intended to harmonize with it. In Leuven, Quentin Massys reached the peak of craftsmanship by compiling and optimizing media-specific knowledge, while another artist seems to use the triptych's time folds to create art for its own sake. In Reformation Germany, the prophet becomes a figure, located between promise and fulfilment, historical events, contemporaneous realities and imaginary dimensions, in whom transition itself acquires a distinctive epochal character. In Mercator's World Map, a long history of knowledge is juxtaposed with numerous modern records and thus acquires a new quality. The hope is that observations like these might stimulate further research into the late medieval and early modern connections between time and mediality.

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TEMPORALITY VERSUS TRANSCENDENCE: MOSAIC AS A MEDIUM BEYOND PERSPECTIVE

Barbara Schellewald

When Georges Duthuit, art historian and son-in-law of Henri Matisse, visited Italy, he told Matisse in a letter from Ravenna, dated 12 October 1924: 'Il baisse encore avec le xv^e qui vise aux effets de perspective et cherche à rendre la réalité. On se reproduit une architecture dans l'architecture [...]. Le secret de l'or est perdu.' Duthuit was arguing from his perspective as someone who was especially fascinated by the relationship between Byzantine mosaics and architectural space.¹ Scholars specialized in the art of the fifteenth century have been more inclined to welcome the 'modernization' of the mosaics through the integration of architectural prospects. Yet art history has never really discussed how, in the process of this change, certain capacities of this medium were fundamentally suspended. In this essay, I focus on just one example, the Cappella della Madonna dei Mascoli in St Mark's in Venice (Fig. 1.1).

The barrel-vaulted chapel is situated at the north side of the church. It was given as an ex-voto to St Mark's by the Doge Francesco Foscari (1423–57), who had been saved from a murderous attack. On the wall behind the altar, an inscription tablet tells us of these circumstances and is marked with the date 1430.

The simple rectangular space opens onto the transept. Mosaics with the cycle of the Virgin's life cover the barrel vault and the wall behind the altar.

¹ Duthuit, *Ecrits sur Matisse*, ed. by Labrusse, p. 211; for more on his particular interest, see his most revealing essay: 'Matisse and Byzantine Space'.

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Figure 1.1. Venice, Basilica di San Marco, Cappella della Madonna dei Mascoli.
Reproduced with permission of Cameraphoto.



Figure 1.2. Venice, Basilica di San Marco, Cappella della Madonna dei Mascoli, Mosaic, Visitation and Dormitio. Image from Wikimedia Commons, issued under a CC-BY licence.

The cycle starts on the wall with the Annunciation: Angel and Virgin are positioned on a small strip to the left and right, in the middle there is a large oculus through which light floods into the chapel. Above this window, God the Father emerges through the gold ground, a dove flying away from him to the right, where the Virgin is sitting. As we will see, in its entire conception this image is quite in keeping with the preceding tradition of mosaics. One aspect is obviously articulated: The incarnation takes place through God; the dove, the Holy Ghost, functions as a mediator between God and the Virgin. In most other Annunciations from the fourteenth century onwards, we observe that the dove moves along a stream of light. Light has a leading role in this event. In the Venetian mosaic the moment of incarnation is made visible not by means of a stream of light depicted in the image but by the combination of the incoming light from the oculus and the gold ground. There is no substantial pictorial architecture or any other indication that refers to our world. This scene seems to be staged as being outside of time.²

² It has become clear that some scholars are critical of this image concept. They expected a much more elaborate setting in the sense of the fifteenth century, which does not consider the materiality of the mosaic; Rossi Scarpa, 'La Cappella dei Mascoli', p. 227.



Figure 1.3. Venice, Basilica di San Marco, Cappella della Madonna dei Mascoli, Mosaic, Birth of the Virgin. Image from Wikimedia Commons, issued under a CC-BY licence.

The situation changes the moment we turn to the barrel vault on which the cycle proceeds. In the apex of the vault (Fig. 1.2), a *Madonna with Child* (in the centre) and *Isaiah* and *David* (at either end) are embedded in medallions, bound to each other through an elaborate design of acanthus tendrils. Behind the Madonna, a blue starry sky is situated on a gold ground, reflecting the ambivalence between the new and the old imagery system, as we will see.

The next two scenes, *Birth of the Virgin* (Fig. 1.3) and *Presentation of the Virgin*, occupy the western half of the vault. Pictorial architecture now becomes a dominating factor in defining the interior space of the images. The buildings in both images are obliquely constructed and thus visible to the beholder from the entrance to the chapel.³ They converge to form an apex in the middle of the vault. In the *Presentation*, the temple architecture with the cupola seems quite conventional, since models for this date back to the fourteenth century. The space in which the figures are placed is not really connected with the architecture, although some figures are positioned in the open areas of the temple.⁴

The dominating architectures in the *Visitation* and the *Dormition* (Fig. 1.2) are constructed in such a way that the spectator has to move into the chapel and position himself in front of each scene.⁵ Each of the three parts of the triumphal arch ends in a pediment, all on the same level. Whereas the middle part of the facade is only single storeyed, both wings are constructed over two floors. Mary and Elizabeth are depicted embracing each other in the centre of the small room opening up in the middle of the triumphal arch. On the second 'floor' of this space, a window leads us toward a background that only exists in the form of a tree emerging. On the left-hand side, a small group of people are watching the couple; the man in front can be identified as Joseph, and the old man sitting underneath the vault on the right-hand side is assumed to be Zechariah.⁶ The biforate windows in the upper storeys are filled with different objects; a woman can even be seen in one window.⁷ There is no clearly defined join between the architecture and the gold ground. In fact, it is hardly possible to define the space of the architecture in the image. The clash between the gold ground and the architecture is revealed most clearly at the most critical point: the tree that emerges just within our visual axis.

³ Muraro, 'The Statutes of the Venetian "Arti"', p. 273.

⁴ I cannot see any analogies with the cupola of the Florentine cathedral, as identified by Rossi Scarpa, 'La Cappella dei Mascoli', p. 225.

⁵ Muraro, 'The Statutes of the Venetian "Arti"', p. 273.

⁶ The iconography is 'modern', as Joseph and Zechariah are newly integrated.

⁷ This section of the mosaic is no longer in its original state.

The barrel-vaulted triumphal arch in the second image on this side opens onto a stage that leads our eyes directly to a deserted street in the background. Different buildings can be seen; porticoes are situated on both sides. The perspective of the vault is accurate. In the foreground, the bed of the Virgin acts like a barrier to the empty and lifeless background. The apostles are lined up in this area. Again, the architecture and the gold ground seem not to touch each other. Rather, the gold ground functions as a screen behind the whole scene. If we raise our eyes to the top of the image, we see a mandorla with Christ against a bank of clouds arising above the deathbed. In his hands, he already holds the soul of the Virgin represented as a small praying figure. Undoubtedly, the appearance of Christ is understood as occurring in the pictorial space.

There is little certainty in the literature about the attribution of the mosaics to different artists. Without doubt, however, Michele Giambono was the first appointed artist. His 'signature', *Michael çambono venetus fecit* on the left-hand side of the vault in the *Presentation of the Virgin*, provides a foundation for this attribution. Not quite as clear are the time and the duration of his engagement.⁸ Work in the chapel was, however, still going on between 1448 and 1449; documents confirm that scaffolding was still in place at this time.⁹ It is probable that the second part was realized only later.¹⁰ According to William Roger Rearick, the process of work after 1450 and 1451 changed following the engagement of

⁸ For Giambono, see Pesaro, 'Michele Giambono'. Pesaro offers an outline of his works with bibliographic notes up to 1992. She speculates that Giambono had been learning about this medium in the workshop of Paolo Uccello, who had been called to Venice to produce mosaics in 1425.

⁹ Documents from Stefano Magno and Marin Sanudo report a theft in the treasury when mosaic work was still underway, as demonstrated by the on-going presence of scaffolding; Rearick, 'The Dormitio Virginis in the Cappella dei Mascoli', p. 346.

¹⁰ I will not go into this question of attribution and dating in too much depth. For our context, it is not of vital importance. We might even add that the mosaics were restored more than once; Rearick, 'The Dormitio Virginis in the Cappella dei Mascoli', p. 347, n. 14. Besides the problem of restorations, technical observations underline the fact that different mosaicists had been working in the chapel (p. 349). Rearick (p. 351) emphasizes that there is 'hardly a significant name of a painter who was active at mid-Quattrocento in Venice or even Florence who has not been credited or saddled with the responsibility for this mosaic'. Merkel is persuaded that Giambono even finished all the mosaics initially, but that some catastrophe must have destroyed the right-hand part of the vault, so only a small piece of his work remained. See Merkel, 'Un problema di metodo'; Merkel, 'La scuola di Andrea di Castagno nei mosaici mariani'. Scholars are more or less in agreement about Michele Giambono and his role. There is much less agreement about the artists who were his followers, for example, Jacopo Bellini and Andrea del Castagno. Only in the last few years has doubt arisen about Andrea del Castagno. Rearick has suggested that Pizolo was involved.

a larger team.¹¹ As regards the *Visitation* (Fig. 1.2), the suggestion that Jacopo Bellini made a contribution is plausible. This idea is based on several observations including a dubious 'inscription' by a Jacopo in the room of the workshops at St Mark's.¹² For the *Dormitio* (Fig. 1.2), most scholars have thought of Andrea del Castagno, and a further name, that of a more local painter from Padua, Nicolò Pizolo, has been suggested by Rearick.¹³ As Castagno had been working in San Zaccharia during an initial visit to Venice, and the figures are quite different from those in the Mascoli chapel, some authors have suggested that he stayed in Venice again in the years 1445 to 1448. No documents for this period can confirm this thesis.¹⁴ Some scholars have proposed that Castagno could have simply sent a design from Florence.¹⁵ Pizolo's interest was focused on Florentine sculpture and painting. In the eyes of Rearick, he was the only artist 'capable of constructing pictorial space according to the rigorous rules promulgated in manuscript form by the great theorist Leon Battista Alberti'.¹⁶ As there are no documents to confirm this either, we should leave this question

¹¹ Rearick, 'The Dormitio Virginis in the Cappella dei Mascoli', p. 347. Regarding the group of apostles in the *Dormition*, he argues that Giambono might have returned to St Mark's after 1453.

¹² There are some preparatory paintings in this room. Whereas some scholars propose a definite attribution to Bellini, Rearick is convinced that the few words left cannot be identified with certainty as Bellini's signature; Rearick, 'The Dormitio Virginis in the Cappella dei Mascoli', p. 348, n. 15. Nevertheless, these sketches are most interesting as two of them have analogies with the architecture of the *Visitation*. According to Rearick (p. 349), the figures of the Virgin and Elizabeth resemble the work of Giambono. For the relationship between these two artists, see Franco, 'Intorno al 1430'. Giambono is rightly described as the more conventional artist. The architecture especially is much more developed as the figures are not only acting in front of a screen; rather they are enclosed by the different parts of the triumphal arch.

¹³ Rearick, 'The Dormitio Virginis in the Cappella dei Mascoli'; for the attribution to Andrea del Castagno, see Thode, 'Andrea del Castagno in Venedig', pp. 309–11; Hartt, 'The Earliest Works of Andrea del Castagno: Part One'; Hartt, 'The Earliest Works of Andrea del Castagno: Part Two'; Muraro, 'The Statutes of the Venetian "Arti"', pp. 272–73; Merkel, 'La scuola di Andrea di Castagno nei mosaici marciani'; Merkel, 'Un problema di metodo'; Horster, *Andrea del Castagno*, pp. 19–20, 173; Rossi Scarpa, 'I mosaici della cappella dei Mascoli'.

¹⁴ After 1451, foreign painters could no longer work in Venice; Muraro, 'The Statutes of the Venetian "Arti"':

¹⁵ Horster, *Andrea del Castagno*, p. 19.

¹⁶ Rearick, 'The Dormitio Virginis in the Cappella dei Mascoli', p. 357. In his conclusion (p. 361) he writes: 'We would conclude that, although of all previous attributions that of Castagno was the most suggestive, the intensely innovative mixture of native Venetian pictorial concerns with a thorough mastery of newly imported Florentine formal devices accords perfectly with our reconstruction of the brief but meteoric rise and eclipse of Nicolò Pizolo.'

of attribution to further research. It is undisputed that the group of Apostles on the right-hand side had not been part of the concept by Castagno (or anyone else); again, it was Giambono's role to fill in this gap.¹⁷ It is necessary to stress that the new processes for planning mosaics, as compared with medieval times, did have an impact on aesthetic qualities. In the traditional method, the preparatory sketches and even a colour version were drawn on the vault itself. This made it possible to control the immediate effect in the architectural space. Here, however, the concept had been drawn on a two-dimensional cartoon. It was the job of the craftsman who was working in the chapel to handle the transfer to the vault. Architectures like these (and not architectural abbreviations) do not really cope well with a curved image carrier.

However, regardless of which account we take, all scholars emphasize that the architecture in the *Dormitio* (Fig. 1.2) is based on a theoretical position like that in Alberti's works.¹⁸ The different forms of staging the narratives in the mosaics seem to reflect a problem that goes far beyond questions of attribution and dating. Whereas the first scene does remain consistent with the medial capacities of the mosaic, in subsequent scenes the architecture seems to aspire within its setting to gain a (virtual) status comparable to the architecture in which the beholder moves. The space is measured out, and there are figures moving around or inside these rooms.¹⁹ Yet there is still a gold ground, a total contrast behind these constructed buildings. The gold ground, with its claim to the world beyond and to transcendence, can be seen as a relic — an inherent part of a different image system, which aims not at a world comparable to our own reality but at something very different.²⁰

The integration of these new settings and stages for a narrative binds the figures to this imagined world and its specific temporality.²¹ Before we go deeper

¹⁷ On the right-hand side we see again a 'fecit' but without any name. Some scholars think that the cartoon had not been finished; Pesaro, 'Michele Giambono', p. 24.

¹⁸ The triumphal arch has been compared to that in Masaccio's *Trinità* in Santa Maria Novella, Florence; Hartt, 'The Earliest Works of Andrea del Castagno: Part Two', p. 227.

¹⁹ Rossi Scarpa, 'La cappella dei Mascoli'.

²⁰ Hartt, 'The Earliest Works of Andrea del Castagno: Part One', p. 177: '[...] gold leaf, a material generally distasteful to Castagno [...]'. Castagno might have been in Ravenna, as Hartt speculates, and must have found there 'a revelation of what mural imagery could accomplish in the imaginative transformation of an architectural interior, in terms of coloristic relations, spatial structure and spiritual richness' (p. 180). Yet the revival of this medium ignores in particular the relation between the gold ground and the space of the beholder. Hartt is convinced about this fifteenth century architecture which now finally enters the construction of mosaics.

²¹ This is not a new process in the fifteenth century. But mosaics, even in the fourteenth

into the differences between these image systems, it might be helpful to consider how our medium was understood in the fifteenth century.

*The Medium of the Mosaic in the Fifteenth Century:
Anachronism or Continuation of a Tradition?*

André Chastel first dealt with the subject of fifteenth-century mosaics back in 1955. He argued: '[...] and throughout the century we see the St. Mark's workshop endeavoring to introduce all the innovations of painting into the traditional décor, and obeying the instructions of the Florentines, who, moreover, considered themselves to be the qualified custodians of the art of the mosaic'.²² In Chastel's view, the Florentines were responsible for the innovative element of these mosaics: the Venetian contribution — attempting to integrate a contemporary organization of space into mosaic images — was merely secondary. Artists like Jacopo Bellini had not been working in this medium from the start; rather, their interest had developed only after Florentine artists had been recruited to work at St Mark's. Chastel is convinced of the Florentine impact on the decoration of St Mark's.

It is no coincidence that Chastel cites the examples of Andrea del Castagno and the Cappella della Madonna dei Mascoli at St Mark's. Turning to Florence itself, the situation there seems totally different. There is no continuity of a long tradition, but rather interest in mosaics is initially limited to the restoration of older mosaics. For example, Alesso Baldovinetti was commissioned to undertake mosaic work in the Florence Baptistery. Yet his role was only to outline the design for the tendril frieze, the 'décor anachronique'.²³ Alvise de Paci, a mosaicist from Venice (!), was called upon to carry out the actual work. At the same time, it is worth mentioning some collecting activities that do show an intense interest in the medium. The well-known collection of Lorenzo de' Medici included a good number of Byzantine micromosaic icons.²⁴ Whereas Piero's inventory lists eight mosaic icons, Lorenzo's inventory already has eleven.²⁵

century, are dominated by architectural abbreviations which leave the dominant role to the gold ground.

²² Chastel, 'La mosaïque à Venise et à Florence', p. 120.

²³ Chastel, 'La mosaïque à Venise et à Florence', p. 124; on pp. 127–28 he describes work carried out by Baldovinetti in Florence.

²⁴ Chastel, 'La mosaïque à Venise et à Florence', p. 126; Müntz, *Les collections des Médicis*, pp. 339, 63, 76–77; Müntz, 'Les mosaïques byzantines portatives'.

²⁵ Fusco and Corti, *Lorenzo de' Medici*, pp. 74, 110, 121. Of the eleven objects in the second inventory, seven appear to be identical to those in the collection of Piero.



Figure 1.4.
Benedetto da Maiano,
sculpture of Giotto,
Florence, Duomo. Image
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Lorenzo de' Medici, fascinated by this medium, even tried to initiate new mosaics. Only in very rare cases, however, were new mosaics not just planned but also executed.²⁶ This topic has recently been taken up, from a quite different perspective, by Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood, who cite this part of the collection as evidence for their concept of an anachronic Renaissance.²⁷ To a far greater extent than Chastel half a century earlier, the two authors concentrate on the diverse implications of this phenomenon of collecting Byzantine

²⁶ Vasari explains that Domenico Ghirlandaio believed that painting as an artform should be considered a type of *disegno*, but that in terms of longevity mosaic was the true painting; Vasari, *Le vite de' piu eccellenti architetti, pittori, e scultori italiani*, p. 469. Vasari is of the opinion that Ghirlandaio produced a new sort of mosaic, a modern form. David and Domenico Ghirlandaio were both engaged in mosaic works. Hojer argues in the comments on the German edition of Vasari (Vasari, *Das Leben des Domenico Ghirlandaio und des Gherardo di Giovanni*, p. 87) that Vasari was postulating a unity of the image, where the additive character of the technique had to be overcome. He valued only durability; all other characteristics were ignored.

²⁷ Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*. Various aspects of the subject are discussed in their book. For Lorenzo de' Medici, see pp. 123–33, with an advanced bibliography relating to his collection.

artefacts. They argue convincingly that these objects were esteemed for their 'temporal immunity'.²⁸ They were part of contemporary discourses, but not as contemporary objects.²⁹ This sort of detachment seems to be characteristic of the second half of the fifteenth century.³⁰ A fairly late example is Benedetto da Maiano's monument for Giotto, from 1490 (Fig. 1.4).

Surprisingly, we are confronted by the artist holding a mosaic image in one hand, while inserting a tessera with his fingers. Although Giotto had been commissioned to produce the Navicella mosaic in Rome, this was not the crucial reason for presenting such a prominent artist in this way. A strong case can be made for interpreting the action depicted — in Florence (!) — not as the production of a new image but as the restoration of a surviving artefact.³¹ We should be wary of applying this interpretation to Venice, as new mosaics continued to be produced there until at least the second half of the century. However, it was not only Roman mosaics that were well known in Florence.³² As early as 12 December 1433, in a letter to Niccolò de' Niccoli, Ambrogio Traversari spoke of the ancient mosaics in Ravenna. As Hartt puts it: 'Nowhere, even at Rome, had he found such beautiful ones. He was especially impressed by the mosaics of San Vitale, but spoke warmly of both Galla Placidia and Classe.'³³ Hartt suggests that Andrea del Castagno made a visit to Ravenna, probably initiated by Traversari. What he calls the 'revival of the mosaic art of Ravenna' is actually bound up with del Castagno's activities in Venice.³⁴ What we do not know — and in my view

²⁸ Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, p. 105.

²⁹ See also Cutler, 'From Loot to Scholarship', pp. 251–54. Cutler gives a broad insight into who was collecting these objects as artefacts.

³⁰ Although I do agree with this perspective, I should add that Vasari would later even propose that the head of Saint Zenobius, a model for the planned decoration of the chapel in the Florentine cathedral, had been done by Gherardo. He and his brother were both engaged in mosaics; Vasari, *Le vite de' piu eccellenti architetti, pittori, e scultori italiani*, I, 471–72.

³¹ Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, p. 133: '[...] such an icon is never made but always restored'. In the next passage: 'he is celebrated as the restorer of art's capacity to make past really present'.

³² Another problem, no doubt, was the fact that Florence simply lacked the workshops to equip artists with the required technical expertise to set new mosaics. In this connection, Nagel and Wood refer to Lorenzo de' Medici and his efforts to persuade Domenico and Davide Ghirlandaio, as well as Monte and Gerardo di Giovanni, to acquire such skills; *Anachronic Renaissance*, p. 130.

³³ Hartt, 'The Earliest Works of Andrea del Castagno: Part One', p. 179.

³⁴ Hartt, 'The Earliest Works of Andrea del Castagno: Part One', p. 180.

this is still one of the unanswered questions — is whether contemporaries were aware of any differences between mosaics in Rome, Ravenna, or Byzantium. The complexity of this topic is underlined by developments in Rome during the second half of the century. Here, the old workshop tradition of mosaic-making had already been disrupted. There were no moves to renew this tradition, but it was, as Nagel and Wood emphasize, ‘remembered’.³⁵ Critical reflection was part of this process of remembrance. Comparing the new fresco decoration of the apse in the Roman Church of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme with the subsequent restoration of the mosaic ceiling, Nagel and Wood conclude that this may even reflect a strong desire to qualify the status of painting as the dominant medium of pictorial art.

In contrast to Florence and Rome, the situation in Venice up until around 1460 seems totally different. At St Mark’s, we are confronted with an ongoing and almost unbroken tradition of mosaics. But rather than introspection, what we find is an intrusion of modernity that is incompatible with tradition — an attempt to harmonize a modern conception of the image with a medium that had undoubtedly developed on different premises. While the adaptations of the mosaic in the fifteenth and even the sixteenth century are characterized by a variety of trends, reflecting a desire for compatibility and an interest in quotation and fictionalization, the traditionalism implicit in the medium is largely ignored.

To understand more precisely how this process worked, we need to uncover the reasons for the conflict between the traditional conception of the medium and, in simple terms, the ‘new’ image. As we have already seen, these new images offer a more or less measured space, thanks to the introduction of a central perspective. The obvious conflict we see here is perhaps the result of a change in the function of the image.

I would like to proceed in two steps. First, we need to determine whether the understanding of the mosaic ‘as a digital medium, and so eminently substitutable’³⁶ coincides with the way it was defined in medieval times — that is to say, in the traditional context.³⁷ This description may accord with the anachronic view, but it fails to take account of an entirely different perspective, which will be discussed in our second step: the gold ground and its function within the medieval image.

³⁵ Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, p. 332.

³⁶ Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, p. 329.

³⁷ Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, pp. 321–33.

The Tradition of the Gold Ground and the Conflict with the New Image

Temporality is not inherent to the gold ground. Rather, the purpose of a gold ground is to establish a relationship with transcendence. Its suitability for this ambitious task is particularly apparent in mosaics. Before exploring this phenomenon, however, we need to gain a better understanding of how the gold ground was used in the fifteenth century. In this period a new understanding of space and time was developing, supported by expanding scientific knowledge, discoveries of the laws of nature, and discoveries in fields such as optics. Increasingly, the use of the gold ground in images was abandoned, although some patrons continued to opt for this *modus* where a traditional context dictated that it should be retained. The rejection of the gold ground by theorists such as Alberti comes as no surprise.³⁸

As Iris Wenderholm has emphasized, this decisive epistemological turn in the fifteenth century gave rise to a deep conflict, in which the gold ground of medieval times was confronted with measured spaces.³⁹ Referring to Konrad Witz's Heilsspiegel altarpiece, she describes the figures as presented on a stage, where they can move and where shadows are produced by the incoming light. In Witz's pictures, we find our gold ground at the back of the stage. As far as we can tell,⁴⁰ the shadows are cut off by this barrier, demarcating a different space, a space that denotes transcendence. The clash of opposing realities in paintings of this kind is obvious, and some works of Konrad Witz reflect this particularly well.⁴¹ A different understanding of religious images becomes evident as the artists attempt increasingly to mirror the real world as it exists. One aspect is a new science-oriented version of the sky, a sky that is no longer related to transcendence. In these images, artists become more and more skilled at visualizing these diverse perceptions of 'heaven' and 'sky'. Before the fifteenth century, this distinction made sense only when dealing with a few select topics. Normally artists took the opposite approach, welcoming the permeability between these two 'worlds'. However, as soon as earthly life came to be defined in concrete terms, with measurable limits set by the world and the firmament, the sky began to be portrayed as something that changed over time. Artists could no longer simply use the sun and the moon to indicate time — they were expected

³⁸ Alberti, *Della pittura*, bk II, sect. 49, pp. 146–48.

³⁹ Wenderholm, 'Aura, Licht und schöner Schein'.

⁴⁰ The painting has been restored, so it is not clear whether we are seeing it in its original state.

⁴¹ For his paintings, see Brinkmann and others, *Konrad Witz*.

to provide a much stronger sense of temporality in their images. Wenderholm rightly draws our attention to an image of the Virgin's Assumption by a Sienese painter from the first quarter of the fifteenth century, in which the blue sky is rolled up.⁴² It is no coincidence that the topic of unrolling heaven starts to be depicted as a prelude to the second coming of Christ at the Last Judgement from about 1300 (incidentally, the same development is also found in Byzantine examples). Temporality and the end of time are bound to each other; to be even more precise, temporality in this context (and at this time) is defined with reference to a future that is only envisioned and remains unknown to humanity. Taking into account this future, the end of time, the idea of temporality has to be suspended in this context, as time is not calculable. What we observe here is a transformation, in which temporality comes to attract much more interest. Unsurprisingly, one consequence of this can be the end of the use of gold ground, which has — at first glance — become incompatible with these changes. Gold ground per se conflicts with any understanding of time; it is more than timeless — it is beyond time. I will add one further example: At this time of transition to a 'scientific-optical argument, which plausibly implements the theological dogma for the contemporary observer',⁴³ we can identify the first real images of night. A wonderful example of this can be found in the *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, which date back to 1411–13.⁴⁴ In the scene 'Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane', night has descended on the garden. Only a few torches flicker here and there, providing a contrast with the all-enveloping darkness. In his study of Leon Battista Alberti and Nicholas Cusanus, Charles Carman emphasizes: 'Gold has been replaced with a seemingly credible spatial setting of architecture. Still the notion of a barrier of sorts exists, separating the viewer's reality and that of the painting's fictive extension of that space where it reaches a limit point.'⁴⁵ However, in his view, this construction does not imply that any metaphorical sense has been suspended. Rather, when looking at these images we sometimes find that at this very point of demarcation 'metaphor takes over'.⁴⁶ If we follow Carman's argument, images in the fifteenth century continue to remind the beholder of the tension between the visible and the invisible. It is certainly possible that viewers might become aware

⁴² Wenderholm, 'Aura, Licht und schöner Schein', p. 108, ill. on p. 109.

⁴³ Wenderholm, 'Aura, Licht und schöner Schein', p. 111.

⁴⁴ Preiswerk, 'Darkness in Illumination'.

⁴⁵ Carman, *Leon Battista Alberti and Nicholas Cusanus*, p. 120.

⁴⁶ Carman, *Leon Battista Alberti and Nicholas Cusanus*, p. 120.

of this metaphorical level, though probably not at first sight.⁴⁷ My aim is not to reject Carman's interpretation but to show that a conflict emerges with the traditional potentiality of mosaics as a medium. If we return to a mosaic like the Saint Zenobius in Florence from 1505, there is no gold ground at all, but a landscape.⁴⁸

Against this background, it appears that a decision was made to align the design of St Mark's Cappella dei Mascoli with the tradition that defines the church as a whole. For the client, the resulting discrepancy seems to have been less important than ensuring that the chapel blended in aesthetically with the building's overall appearance. Little consideration was given to the consequences that 'modernization' — the introduction of an architecture using central perspective — might have for the gold ground and the inherent potential of the mosaic. But before taking this argument further, we need to be clear about the specific function of the gold ground and the potential of mosaic as a medium in the medieval Byzantine tradition.

The Potential of Mosaic as a Medium and the Function of the Gold Ground

Mosaic is best understood as a dynamic medium.⁴⁹ First, the material conditions have to be taken into account. Small tesserae, made of glass or other materials, are laid out on a mostly curved surface. These squares — and not only the gold ones — are tilted at an angle to ensure that light is reflected well.⁵⁰ The surface is not closed but becomes partly transparent due to the glass. The familiar relationship between figure and ground becomes obsolete here, as a ground in the sense of a closed surface does not exist. According to Byzantine image the-

⁴⁷ His new reading of the images is most interesting, and I do not doubt this potential of the new image. However, the observer has to stride across this constructed space and into its depths.

⁴⁸ In 1490 Lorenzo de' Medici made a contract with Ghirlandaio and Gherardo di Giovanni for the chapel of St Zenobius. Only a test panel for this mosaic decoration was realized; Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, pp. 130–31.

⁴⁹ Some thoughts on this topic have already been published in Schellewald, 'Eintauchen in das Licht', and Schellewald, 'Transformation and Animation'.

⁵⁰ See, for example, the mosaic in the narthex of Hagia Sophia over the entrance into the naos: Whittemore, *The Mosaics of Hagia Sophia at Istanbul*, p. 22. During the restoration of the apse mosaic of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai the angles were also measured. At St Mark's, those parts that are more or less in their original state indicate that this technique was also implemented.



Figure 1.5. Venice, Basilica di San Marco. Archive Horst Hallensleben.

ory, the ‘see-through effect’ takes us into the realm of the other, the ‘unseen’.⁵¹ Mosaic has an inherent tendency toward dematerialization. The sacred and hidden truths about celestial beings can best be imagined through a medium that plays with the ambiguity of first showing something and then immediately taking it away (Fig. 1.5). What drives this process is the changing light. The defining characteristic of mosaic as a medium is the fact that its appearance is enlivened by light. Changes in light during the day and over the course of the four seasons are responsible for the dynamic that plays out in the holy space.

⁵¹ Besides the texts from the diverse councils before, during and after the iconoclastic controversy, three authors deserve mention: Johannes Damaskenos, Patriarch Nikephoros, and Theodoros Studites. All three left treatises or speeches of defence in which they laid out their arguments for the icon. This is not the place to discuss the range of disparate arguments that each of them develops. For more on the history and extensive bibliographic information, see: Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca. 680–850): The Sources*; Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, ca. 680–850: A History*; for the theoretical positions: Parry, *Depicting the Word*; Brubaker, *Inventing Byzantine Iconoclasm*; Elsner, ‘Image and Iconoclasm in Byzantium’; Giakalis, *Images of the Divine*; Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon*.



Figure 1.6. Daphni, Mosaic, Annunciation. Reproduced with permission of Image Archive.

Artificial light is also extremely important; Byzantine *typika* (service books) contain descriptions of the devices used to alter lighting within churches. The surface of the mosaic is involved in every shift of light. As light levels increase, certain things become visible, while as darkness descends, the same parts or others disappear from sight. The term *photismos* (from *phos*, 'light') has the sense of 'illumination' as well as 'enlightenment'.⁵² An endless process of revealing and concealing is inherent to the medium. In particular, the unstable light and the gleam emanating from the gold ground seem to offer the observer the chance to glimpse something that is not to be seen: the Divine. Byzantine image theory considers the light that we see to be an image of celestial light. The prototype enhances the image, making light — in Orthodox Christian terms — an emanation of the divine light.⁵³

⁵² The *Souda* is one of the most prominent encyclopedias in Byzantium: *Suidae Lexikon*, ed. by Adler, I, 217.

⁵³ The writings of Pseudo-Dionysios the Areopagite have been studied intensively by lead-

During the iconoclastic controversy, theoretical positions on images were developed. The image is considered not merely as something made using colours or other materials. Rather, an icon is defined as a channel to the non-material, to the 'Holy'. The honour offered to the icon is passed directly on to its prototype. But since icons form part of a much greater setting — the liturgical space — we have to take into account the concrete situation of our beholder.⁵⁴ If we return to the Byzantine domed churches of the eleventh century, whose construction was informed by these theoretical positions, mosaics are arranged in a very particular way. The so-called festival icons appear in the squinches under the central cupola and are dominated by the active figures, with narrative details kept to a minimum (Fig. 1.6). Architectural details are included only to indicate a place, such as the altar. The figures occupy the frontal line of the squinch; it is as though they are acting *not within* the image but in the space of the church. Through the use of the so-called 'anti-perspective', their bodies have been elongated, so that the observer standing in the church perceives each figure in plausible proportions.⁵⁵ Rather than inhabiting their own (image or imagined!) space, the saints belong to our space. As Otto Demus points out, the beholder and the saint share the same space. While the observer becomes a participant in past events drawn from biblical history, the saints themselves become participants in the Holy Liturgy. The logical consequence of this image system is that there is no segregation between the two spaces and everything connected with them. Together, the saints enable us to make contact with the sacred. So far we have said nothing about the idea of temporality. In Byzantine image theory, the sacred space is clearly seen as uniting past, present and future. Each liturgy is not just an act of commemoration but rather a re-enactment of Christ's Passion. Christ is present. Icons are not separate: they exist as an integral part of the Orthodoxy. The *Horos* of the seminal Second Council of Nicaea, at which the veneration of icons was reinstated, outlines the diverse functions of images:⁵⁶ they are an animation of the past and are no less significant than the things that are happening now. In the Orthodox system, the litur-

ing authors. In his texts, he deals not only with created light, but also with God as light. Suchla, *Dionysius Areopagita*, pp. 141–55 for the relation between Johannes Damaskenos and Pseudo-Dionysius: Stock, *Theurgisches Denken*.

⁵⁴ The first author to deal with this phenomenon was Otto Demus in his study *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration*.

⁵⁵ The term 'anti-perspective' is somewhat misleading; for a rereading of Demus, see Schellewald, 'Ikone und Raum – die Konstituierung des Heiligen'.

⁵⁶ Giakalis, *Images of the Divine*.

gical year is the normal unit of time. It is repeatable and, in a certain sense, endless in awaiting the end of time with the Second Coming of Christ; however, in the liturgy, time is suspended. Time conceived in relation to each liturgical year becomes obvious when we consider two icons of St Catherine at Mount Sinai.⁵⁷ In the middle, Christ or the Virgin with Child are depicted, surrounded by the scenes from a festival cycle announcing the whole liturgical year. This circle has no beginning and no end; it is part of the cycle of time. Time is ongoing but not calculable.⁵⁸ It is beyond our competence to make the relationship between finiteness and infinity concrete and so, as long as our world exists, we repeat. As Mircea Eliade describes it: ‘in *imitating* the exemplary acts of a god [for the Christian world this would be the passion of Christ, author’s note] or of a mythical hero, or simply by recounting their adventures, the man of an archaic society detaches himself from profane time and magically re-enters the Great Time, the sacred time.’⁵⁹ This ‘sacred time’ is not equivalent to our profane construction of time. Mosaics and the spatial setting of images/icons elevate our status as beholders to that of eyewitnesses. Without doubt, the medium best able to visualize this process — to make all of this present — is mosaic. The image exists only for a moment; a second later, it is already different, undermining any sense of stability. To conclude this short overview: Byzantine mosaics are best understood as a dynamic medium designed to lead the beholder into transcendence by freeing him from any sense of temporality and, in so doing, putting him in contact with the sacred. This interpretation is confirmed by ekphrasis by various authors.⁶⁰ Although the ekphrasis is part of a rhetoric practice, these texts offer us an excellent insight into how sacred buildings and their images were perceived.

Up to this point we have concentrated on Byzantine mosaics. Returning to St Mark’s, we find a much more complex situation. Despite the fact that the mosaics in the naos of St Mark’s are arranged in a Byzantine manner, with mini-

⁵⁷ Belting, *Bild und Kult*, pp. 282–83.

⁵⁸ For the Byzantine world at least, we might refer to Plato’s *Timaeus*, in which he explains the relationship between the temporal image and eternity: ‘It is made after the pattern of the ever enduring nature, in order that it may be as like that pattern as possible; for the pattern is a thing that has been for all eternity; whereas the Heaven has been and is and shall be perpetually throughout all time’; Plato, *Timeas*, trans. by Bury, p. 98.

⁵⁹ Mircea Eliade, cited in Cohen, *Transformations of Time and Temporality*, p. 41. The term ‘ancient’ or ‘archaic’ is problematic for us.

⁶⁰ For ekphrasis in Byzantium, see, for example, James and Webb, “To Understand Ultimate Things and Enter Secret Places”; Nelson, “To say and to see”.

mal use of architectural abbreviations, it is important to note that some of the intellectual background is lacking — especially in terms of image theory.⁶¹ In Byzantium, these discourses are crucial as they underline the status of the icon. However, even in their absence, the material aspects of these mosaics with their shimmering, gleaming gold ground serve to evoke an atmosphere that tends to take the beholder toward transcendency. This is reflected in a series of historical descriptions that capture this particular ‘mystical’ atmosphere. And there can be no doubt that the important role played by light in revealing and concealing images was understood, as the writings of Pseudo-Dionysios the Areopagite had already been translated into Latin.⁶²

Mosaics between Conflict and Loss, or Rescuing the Gold Ground

If we return to our ‘modern’ Venetian mosaics, it is obvious that the images with their defined architecture, or rather their own rooms, produce a setting that is not identical to the chapel in which we as beholders are standing. Here, the difference in movement deserves emphasis: In a traditional mosaic, figures emerge from a sacred world and offer us the chance to make contact with transcendency by sharing a space with us. This concept is further underlined during the liturgy, as the re-enactment is understood as an image of the Heavenly Liturgy.⁶³ In the new version of the mosaic, the figures no longer share our space; a virtual space has been created for them instead. A conflict therefore arises between the new image system and the traditional mosaic.⁶⁴ When planning images for the chapel, artists used flat surfaces. At the moment when the mosaic workshop transferred these models to the vault, the image architectures underwent a certain type of distortion (Fig. 1.1). A moment of disorder is inevitable, since there is no given compatibility between the old and the new image systems.

⁶¹ Even during the decoration of the naos in St Mark’s a sort of ‘translation’ of the Byzantine images in the Latin context can be observed. In the Passion cycle, some figures hold rolls with direct speech in Latin; Demus, *The Mosaics of San Marco in Venice*, pp. 196–212. A study concerning this phenomenon is in preparation.

⁶² For his writings in a Western context, see Thunø, ‘Decus suus splendet ceu Phoebus in orbe’.

⁶³ Schellewald, ‘Vom Unsichtbaren zum Sichtbaren’.

⁶⁴ Bertelli, ‘Die Renaissance des Mosaiks’, instead holds the opinion — quite contrary to my own — that the crisis of the mosaic has now been overcome.

However, the architecture does fulfil a specific function. It provides the figures with a home that is designed to constitute a prominent part of the image itself. To achieve compatibility with our own reality and a closeness to us, this home appears to *mirror* the world of the beholder. The context for the narrative of the past is clothed in the vestments of the present. Consequently, it is bound to a 'this-worldliness'. The figures are acting within their own temporality, which is not identical to that of the beholder (Fig. 1.2). Although the image seems to mirror our space, it is governed by its own principles in many respects. Movements are manifested in the image. The narrative system is, at first glance, characterized by its detachment from the reality of the beholder. Space and time are no longer shared between beholder and image figures. Rather than the principle of sharing, the status of the image as a mirror is emphasized.

In a sense, the transition to transcendence is achieved only through a substantial qualitative leap. And yet the new mosaic images are not well prepared for this leap. In the traditional mosaics, the process of revealing and concealing was fundamental. Now this capacity is no longer needed; in fact, just the opposite is required, as the narrative is intended to be constantly in view. The angles at which the tesserae were laid out on the surface were so calculated as to provide optimal reflection of the gold ground. Now that the gold ground is no longer dominant, the different angles of reflection are no longer needed.⁶⁵ The medium is testing its potential to meet the requirements of the fifteenth century. For the patron who commissioned these mosaics, it was important to engage modern artists to ensure that the final product would fulfil the expectations of the contemporaries. The mosaic became part of an art system. In this chapel, however, the mosaic images are marked by a type of indetermination. There is still gold ground at the back, which must surely be more than simply a relic from the past. Although there is conflict and loss, we should not underestimate the constancy of its presence. We have the ability to direct our eyes through the different layers of the image to the very end: the gold ground. This still offers us the possibility of coming into contact with the world beyond, of reaching transcendency. We might return at this point to the emerging tree in the *Visitation* (Fig. 1.2), mentioned at the beginning of this essay. At first glance, it appears to have no significance at all. Yet if we look at it more closely, we notice that there are apples on the branches. An apple tree in connection with gold ground must refer to paradise. Therefore we do see something that

⁶⁵ As far as I am aware, no research has as yet been undertaken into the specific setting of the tesserae in this chapel.

cannot be seen: a world that has been closed and then reopened through the Incarnation of Christ, in which the Mother of God has a leading role. However, there must be a particular understanding of the image that allows for this ambivalence. It is tempting now to follow Carman, who concludes at the end of his investigation into the possibilities of the Renaissance image: 'The rationalist/irrationalist divide might actually begin to diminish were we able to see the "rational" aspect of Alberti's geometry as dialectically related to its metaphorical role as a sign for what lies beyond, out of reach of reason's grip on empirical evidence.'⁶⁶ Although we can analyse the conflict and loss, we must admit that there is more than just this in these images; there is more than simply this 'grip'. The gold ground is not fully relieved of its traditional functions here.

⁶⁶ Carman, *Leon Battista Alberti and Nicholas Cusanus*, p. 164.

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THE TRIPTYCH AND ITS TIME FOLDS: ARTISTIC EXPLORATIONS AROUND 1500

Marius Rimmele

A media-oriented approach to the question of temporality has to conceptualize ‘time’ as a cultural product. As we have learned from Kant, Bergson, and the phenomenologists, time is experienced intrapsychologically and as such projected onto the world by the individual mind.¹ Thus it is ‘made’ up’ by perceiving, feeling, and thinking individuals. But as Norbert Elias has shown, there is also a strong cultural foundation, which crystallizes around symbols and, one could add, significant media constellations.² Both can be understood as part of a fundamental matrix for any interpersonal forms of categorization and representation of time. Götz Großklaus has re-evaluated Elias’s insights for his influential study *Medien-Zeit, Medien-Raum*, which sees time as attached to both individual experience *and* collective social norms and as such dependent on media.³ He targets the following aspects as especially fruitful for thinking about time in a media-oriented way: First, the differentiation of ‘social time’ from objective physical time and the aforementioned forms of strictly subjective (experienced) time; second, the understanding of this kind of social time as a symbolic construction; and finally, the determination of time in a given socio-historical context as a symbolic expression of

¹ A useful summary is provided by Pochat, *Bild-Zeit*, II, 10–16.

² Elias, *Über die Zeit*.

³ Großklaus, *Medien-Zeit, Medien-Raum*.

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Figure 2.1. Quentin Massys, Saint Anne triptych, exterior. 1509. c. 224.5 × 401.8 cm. Oil on panel. Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels. Photo: Antoine Motte dit Falisse.

specific experiences of the ceaseless flows of movement and events, a social signifier offering an authoritative representation of social temporal regimes.⁴ The following thoughts will touch upon this complex of ‘mediating time’ without relying too much on formulaic propositions such as those of Großklaus’s study. These could turn out to harbour a bias because they operate with media concepts designed to analyse modern phenomena. But there is an even more basic reason to eschew them: There are no readily available theories at hand for ‘our’ kind of medium, simply because it does not even seem clear what should be addressed as such to begin with. Where one ‘medium’ ends and the next begins

⁴ Großklaus, *Medien-Zeit, Medien-Raum*, pp. 11–12.

has to be defined relative to a specific context of communication, representation, translation, distribution, storage, and so forth. To fully accept this challenge means trying to unveil a certain *complex of mediation* just by describing it as a functional constellation, instead of taking a given 'medium' and posing the question of time with regard to it.

Personally, I am interested not just in the historical functions and modes of *pictures* (which would be a common and accepted type of medium in the context of communication) or *painted panels* (which would be a medium in a specific art-historical sense of the word), but primarily in distinct formats or supports of pictures, which might turn out to be media in their own right, depending on the precise constellation in which they once functioned. A triptych understood as a carrier of images (a medium as conceived by Hans Belting⁵) will lead to valuable insights that are different from the equally valuable insights gained by examining a triptych (in this case including its imagery) as a vehicle for religious experience or memory culture. I have written elsewhere about aspects such as the triptychs' inherent symbolicity or its possibilities for creating aura.⁶ The following reflection on temporal structures will be another step toward configuring a specific medium within its historical context. Having said this, I should reiterate the aforementioned relativity of mediality: To be precise, there is no such thing as 'the' medium called triptych, even if we focus solely on temporal problems. When we speak about 'mediating', are we thinking about *representing* time, *actively structuring* time, or *manipulating a feeling for* time? Anticipating some decisive points of the following explorations, we have to assert that our particular task will lead to some possibly disturbing amalgams, collaborations, or hopefully — in the best moments of analysis — *transitions* between representational and pragmatic aspects. This seems to be a crucial point when dealing with pictures in functional contexts. To be interested in a medial point of view, of course, means more than just investigating the way in which conceptions of time or temporal regimes were sedimented in these pictures. At the same time, the pragmatic dimension of interaction with the three-dimensional object *triptych* cannot be fully explored if we ignore the preeminent function of any picture: namely to represent, to be looked at and made sense of.

Before we consider some of the general possibilities inherent in the triptych, which may in principle be relevant for certain specific temporal operations, it

⁵ This concept of 'medium' is explored in Belting, *An Anthropology of Images*.

⁶ Cf. Rimmel, *Das Triptychon als Metapher*, and Rimmel, 'Das Prinzip Schrein'.



should be noted that the following reflections are conceived simply as preliminary parameters with which to approach the subsequent case studies. None of the aspects mentioned claims universal validity for a picture format that fulfilled many functions from antiquity until the seventeenth century.

A triptych is an object which transmutes and thus creates a succession of views in real time. As such, like other *dispositifs* of images which are to be read in spatial succession — a scroll, a frieze, a church interior⁷ — it inevitably tends to symbolize this kind of temporal process or at least sensitizes the beholder to its temporal dimension. As a symbolic structure, it is ‘filled’ by the artist with culturally relevant temporal concepts in accordance with his intentions. These of course can be manifold. One of the main objectives of Christian winged pictures seems to be to create a revelatory effect, which includes at least two distinct points in time (one before, and one after the opening) as well as a striv-

⁷ Cf. Heck and Lippincott, ‘Introduction’, p. 3.



Figure 2.2.
 Quentin Massys, Saint Anne
 triptych, interior. 1509.
 Oil on panel. Musées royaux
 des Beaux-Arts, Brussels.
 Photo: Antoine Motte
 dit Falisse.

ing toward a certain feeling of timelessness when confronted with more or less ‘unworldly’ visions (see for example Fig. 2.2).⁸ Bound up with this objective is the broad tendency to define a kind of threshold between the temporal and the spiritual. Hence, many artists responded to the complex temporal implications of liturgical representation, and of the Eucharist in particular, by engaging with questions of presence and absence in a remarkably sophisticated fashion.⁹ Of course, one must differentiate here between huge altarpieces and small-scale instruments of individual devotion like our second example (Figs 2.4 and 2.5). But the fact that a work was produced in anticipation of a ‘private’ setting rather

⁸ Wolf, *Deutsche Schnitzretabel*, pp. 345, 355, 368, 371, 376; Decker, *Das Ende des mittelalterlichen Kultbildes*, pp. 82–83.

⁹ See, for example, Möhle, ‘Wandlungen’; Schlie, ‘Von außen nach innen, am Scharnier von Präsenz und Absenz’; Falkenburg, ‘Hieronymus Bosch’s Mass of St. Gregory and “sacramental vision”’.



Figure 2.3. Joos van Ghent, Calvary triptych, interior. c. 1467–69, 214 × 326.5 cm. Oil on panel. Saint Bavo's Cathedral, Ghent. © Lukas – Art in Flanders VZW. Photo: Hugo Maertens.

than being officially involved in the deepest mysteries of faith would not necessarily have precluded all sophistication, considering the enormous theoretical efforts that were made to explain contact with the divine through prayer.¹⁰ Moreover, a number of fifteenth- and even sixteenth-century examples demonstrate that the barriers between 'official' and 'private' contexts were porous enough to allow frequent translocations of pictures from houses to churches

¹⁰ Cf. for example Ringbom, 'Devotional Images and Imaginative Devotions'; Harbison, 'Visions and Meditations in Early Flemish Painting'; Honée, 'Image and Imagination'; Rothstein, *Sight and Spirituality*, esp. pp. 49–91; Falkenburg, 'Hans Memling's Van Nieuwenhove Diptych'.



after the death of their former owner.¹¹ In many cases the iconography seems to be flexible enough to allow such changes of context. In addition, Anja Sibylle Steinmetz has gathered broad pictorial evidence that the adaptation to special liturgical rites was not especially strict in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.¹² During this period, in most cases, the triptychs behind the altars were not the fine-tuned liturgical time machines one might imagine. Instead they were adapted to the necessities of the rite in a broader way, which nevertheless incorporated their own structure.

Analysing the special temporality of retables, Bruno Reudenbach has repeatedly underlined how the symbolic qualities of *Flügelretabel* stand for important patterns of religious time.¹³ They can be seen as a kind of node of intersection between the circular movement of liturgical time and the straight trajectory of salvific history. Thus they simultaneously serve different time structures and visibly unite them right at the most holy spot in the church.¹⁴ Quite a number of northern triptychs, for example, show the Annunciation on the outside and the cross on the central panel. The layered structure seems privileged to lend visible form to certain special Christian temporal coincidences, such as the annunciation and cru-

¹¹ Harbison, 'The Northern Altarpiece as a Cultural Document', p. 54; Jacobs, *Opening Doors*, pp. 16–18.

¹² Steinmetz, *Das Altarretabel in der altniederländischen Malerei*, pp. 36–37 and 45–46.

¹³ Reudenbach, 'Der Altar als Bildort'; Reudenbach, 'Wandlung als symbolische Form', especially pp. 258–59.

¹⁴ 'Das Flügelretabel kann somit als ein nahezu ideales Instrument angesehen werden, um das System bedeutungsvoller Bezüge innerhalb der christlichen Heilsgeschichte in seiner ganzen Komplexität veranschaulichen zu können, zumal es, auf oder hinter dem Altar platziert, stets in den Kontext liturgischer Aktionen eingebunden war, die ebenfalls diesem Anliegen verpflichtet waren.' ('Thus the winged retable can be seen as a virtually ideal instrument to illustrate the system of significant connections within Christian salvific history in all its complexity, especially since in its place on or behind the altar it was always enmeshed in the context of liturgical actions, which were also in the services of the same aim.') Reudenbach, 'Der Altar als Bildort', p. 31.



Figure 2.4. Master of the Saint Bartholomew Altarpiece (workshop), Nativity with donors, interior. c. 1500–10. Oil on panel. 31.5 × 20.6 cm (central panel). Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud, Cologne. © Rheinisches Bildarchiv. Photo: Sabrina Walz.

cifixion (and creation and fall of man, etc.) all happening on 25 March.¹⁵ It seems as if the Christian timeline was rendered foldable, and as if the folds were then stitched together by divine providence and liturgy, thus creating special

¹⁵ In the chapter concerning the Annunciation, the *Legenda Aurea* (Jacobi a Voragine, *Legenda Aurea*, ed. by Graesse, p. 221) mentions the following events in a somewhat disturbing order ('In hac die [ut dicitur] per multa temporum curricula Deus multa operatus est'): Annunciation, crucifixion, creation of Adam, beheading of John the Baptist, offering of Melchizedek, liberation of St Peter out of prison, redemption of the good thief, killing of Abel, offering of Isaac, fall of man, martyrdom of St Jacob, rising of the dead.



effects of compression for better visibility of cause and effect. Christ in the middle of time works like a centre of gravity: people and events prior to Christ seem to look ahead, everything afterward looks back, up to and including the present moment of the triptych's viewers. The resulting typological connections between the Old Testament and the New, or between Christ and his imitators, can also be pointed out structurally, for example as overlaps between outside and inside in this system of layered time.¹⁶ Although the older *Flügelretabel* discussed by Reudenbach normally bear a far more multipartite program, such structural correspondences to Christian time anomalies may well be at work in altarpieces from the following centuries.

In structural terms, it is not only the main threshold — the layering with its perceptible division of outside and inside — that has temporal implications. Further relevant divisions are provided by the gaps between the opened wings, which lead to a tripartite structure, open to narrative elaboration by the artist, as will be seen in the case of Massys's Saint Anne Triptych (Fig. 2.2).¹⁷ As such, the unavoidable gaps inspire further substructures within represented time, and also bring the temporality of reception into play, as Shirley N. Blum's reconstruction of an ideal viewer's experience suggests:

Rather than being immediately apparent, the iconography unfolds slowly. The spectator must move through the central panel and then through the two wings. As in a medieval church, the total thought realm is not revealed until all the parts have been experienced. [...] The triptych is as demanding of its viewer as is an edifice, although in a less complex and dramatic way. The viewer is limited to a fixed pattern of viewing, a pattern that is sequentially ordered in both time and significance.¹⁸

¹⁶ Reudenbach, 'Der Altar als Bildort', p. 31.

¹⁷ For the different sorts of thresholds, see Jacobs, *Opening Doors*, esp. p. 4; The narrative implications are treated by Pilz, *Das Triptychon als Kompositions- und Erzählform*, and Neuner, *Das Triptychon in der frühen altniederländischen Malerei*.

¹⁸ Blum, *Early Netherlandish Triptychs*, p. 4.

Another thing that becomes clear here is that time and space are interconnected in a way that makes it virtually impossible to deal with them in isolation, especially if visual representation is involved. Paradoxical constructions of time will lead to paradoxical spaces and vice versa. Any tendency to reflect or support liturgical re-presence will have to make use of this interdependency to create a disturbing vision that deepens the beholder's awareness of the strange fact that then and now fall together — and at the same time anticipate the future. The space must then be defamiliarized, made uncanny, in order to express and transmit the miraculous paradoxes of time.¹⁹ Tactics of distortion like this are — as contradictory as it may sound — vital elements of late medieval 'sacramental realism'.²⁰

Aside from the above-mentioned physical features of a two-fold appearance and a tripartite structure, we should also keep in mind the common tendencies of late medieval religious paintings to play with represented time. Particularly in early Netherlandish painting, we are confronted with a typical compression of time, what Alfred Acres calls 'large time'.²¹ This is mainly for the benefit of the donor, who is thus given the opportunity to witness central events of salvific history. We also recognize this kind of strategy in our second paradigm (Figs 2.4 and 2.5). This is a late medieval phenomenon, shaped by recommended practices of prayer and meditation, which are undertaken in order to be freed from sin. The manuals focus on mental participation, particularly in the life of Christ.²² But just under the surface of these depicted acts of imagination there is also a desire for eternity, an elaboration of the principal idea of overcoming death by immortalizing oneself in a portrait.²³ This facet becomes particularly salient in epitaphs, where the construction hovers even more strikingly between a represented act of devotional imagination and an anticipated eternal *visio beatifica*.²⁴ A triptych is a privileged medium for such intentions, because

¹⁹ Cf. Belting and Kruse, *Die Erfindung des Gemäldes*, pp. 83 and 85; the general dynamics are also treated by Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico*, esp. pp. 114–53.

²⁰ For a detailed discussion of the notion of 'sacramental realism', cf. Schlie, *Bilder des Corpus Christi*, esp. pp. 279–80.

²¹ Acres, 'Small Physical History', p. 8.

²² See, for example, Conway, *The 'Vita Christi' of Ludolph of Saxony*; Harbison, 'Visions and Meditations in Early Flemish Painting'; Honée, 'Image and Imagination'.

²³ Cf. Frey, 'Das Zeitproblem in der Bildkunst', pp. 213–14, 232.

²⁴ 'The use of art as epitaph is, in a sense, the assertion of imagery as the opposite of *vanitas*; in which art, in subject and context functioning as a surrogate immortality, provides the beholder with an intimation of divine revelation. The painted epitaph — a prayer in perpetuity



Figure 2.5. Master of the Saint Bartholomew Altarpiece (workshop), Nativity with donors, exterior. *c.* 1500–10. Oil on panel. *c.* 31.5 × 20.6 cm. Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud, Cologne. © Rheinisches Bildarchiv. Photo: Sabrina Walz.

it provides a kind of encasement where one's effigy is allowed to dwell together with the sacred in a secluded holy space.²⁵

Furthermore, this newer approach, which declares what is presented to be a kind of mental imagery, may potentially come into conflict with older strategies of time compression that had been used, for instance, to provide theological insight via effects now referred to as *conceptual blending*.²⁶ These are compressions of long chains of causalities or confluences of beginnings and endings within one picture, which attempt to demonstrate the argument in a more easily comprehensible, self-evident fashion. A case in point is unmarked insertions of Old Testament prefigurations in New Testament scenes.²⁷ We have already seen that this strategy is believed to have been used by divine providence itself, for example, with regard to 25 March. Another older strategy of time compression is the aforementioned desire to eliminate time, especially within the innermost view of a folding retable, which traditionally claims to offer a touch of eternity for the beholder. Saints from a variety of different time periods might show up even around a rudimentary narrative scene that includes Christ and his mother in a paradisiacal no man's land.²⁸ Two other relevant factors, already touched on above, merit closer examination: the role of the donor or the individual who buys a picture, and the question of experiences, triggered by the triptych format and its reinforcing imagery. I will briefly consider each of these in turn.

Starting from Reudenbach's reflections on the temporality of winged retables, we are seduced into following a top-down model of information conveyed by a religious picture for edifying or educational purposes. But for many late medieval and Renaissance triptychs, it seems equally productive to ask the other way around: to what extent are they instruments of religious or social self-empowerment for their donors or owners? As Shirley N. Blum has pointed out, the history of the early Netherlandish triptych is closely connected with

— is also a spiritualized effigy of the body buried below, realizing in its contents the faith and aspiration of its deceased sponsor'; Eisler, 'Rubens' Uses of the Northern Past', p. 78. See also Heller, *Das altniederländische Stifterbild*, pp. 25–26.

²⁵ Rimmele, *Das Triptychon als Metapher, Körper und Ort*, pp. 287–306. This model was attractive until the time of Rubens. See Rimmele, 'Triptychonflügel als Pendants?', pp. 255–56.

²⁶ Cf. Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*.

²⁷ Or the other way around, the integration of proleptic elements such as the crucifix in Rogier van der Weyden's *Columba Altarpiece*. See Theissing, *Die Zeit im Bild*, pp. 3–6, which also highlights some other fruitful time discrepancies in the same picture.

²⁸ An example would be Stefan Lochner's *Dombild*, today Cologne, Hohe Domkirche, cf. Chapuis, *Stefan Lochner*, pp. 58–66.

the question of patronage and the tendency of non-aristocratic individuals to commission paintings.²⁹ In Blum's book this connection seems more or less a question of historical transmission: the official donations of retables produced better source material than smaller single panels or diptychs. But a new approach to the theme by Lynn F. Jacobs draws attention to some causal interdependence between the rise of individual patronage and the popularity of the triptych itself.³⁰ This holds true if we believe, like Jacobs, that the threshold created by the gaps of the wings is somehow crucial for the representation of the donor, especially in the first generation of the *ars nova*, starting within the first quarter of the fifteenth century.³¹ In fact, this phenomenon was quite long-lived: the donor and his family members crowded into both wings is still the ruling paradigm as late as the early seventeenth century.

If we return to the initial idea that there is something like collective, social time in any relation to forms of individual time (life time, subjective feeling of time, reception time), we could ask to what extent a special media constellation might be appropriate or even explicitly designed to bring these together. One not-implausible hypothesis is that a religious triptych might function as a kind of relay between *micro* and *macro* time dimensions.³² 'Mediating time' like this might have to do with the process of actual reception, but is by no means restricted to it, if we remember the case of the epitaphs. Consequently we have to think about the individual in two positions: as the viewer as well as a part of the picture, where a painted avatar is granted access to otherworldly realms.³³ Hence both approaches seem to be equally productive: the triptych as an instrument of individual or collective instruction in questions of 'official' time and as a means of, for example, 'sneaking into' eternal realms or otherwise 'synchronizing' worldly individual life time with the great time spans of church and salvation. The two aspects can be situated differently between the poles of pure representation and a more technical device to shape an individual's time experience.

²⁹ Blum, *Early Netherlandish Triptychs*, pp. 2–3; cf. also Harbison, 'The Northern Altarpiece as a Cultural Document', pp. 65–66.

³⁰ Jacobs, *Opening Doors*, pp. 40–42.

³¹ Jacobs, *Opening Doors*, pp. 40–42.

³² Cf. Köster and Schubert, 'Einleitung', on the idea of measuring mediated time in terms of micro, meso and macro.

³³ For the figure of the avatar, cf. Rimmele, *Das Triptychon als Metapher, Körper und Ort*, pp. 296–97.

The question of how triptychs actually manipulated the beholder's time from a phenomenological perspective is by its very nature far more fuzzy than the aforementioned factors. We have already touched upon the special qualities of an epiphanic apparatus in a dense interplay with liturgy to create a moment of arrested time, comparable to the widespread belief that no one gets any older while attending mass.³⁴ Some complementary, thought-provoking ideas were proposed by David Wilkins in his study on Florentine small devotional triptychs.³⁵ He sees small-scale triptychs as possible mechanisms for altering a state of mind: 'The hinged triptych was an object that had to be touched to be activated, indicating a sequence in time implicit in the work: a period when the work is closed and another when it is open.'³⁶ To handle and particularly to open the devotional object might be understood as part of a personal ritual, the outer 'transformative movements'³⁷ may well lead to some inner transformation. To follow this idea we might think about the triptych's wings as a haptic demarcation or even a starting signal for a routine mental shift toward religious attentiveness. Like a short *rite de passage*, the manipulation of the object might switch the viewer to a different mode of perceiving time and space.³⁸ A final and widely underestimated potential quality of the triptych has already been touched upon briefly: Triptychs are more than just a grid to fill or a presentational apparatus. Rather, they are also a kind of shrine, which encloses and even *folds* pictures. The first aspect might imply that the 'inner' things are excluded from the world's flux of time. Whoever gains pictorial entrance here remains preserved in a very special *heterotopia*, a miniaturized heaven, together with the saints until his body is resurrected and all time ends. The second aspect is an often neglected spatial quality, which also influences the representation of time. What happens, one might ask, if a narrative succession is folded onto itself? Symbolically speaking, the unfolding of time in history gets wrapped back up in itself, which is per se an eternal perspective that cannot be appropriated by man, just as no viewer can actually posit himself inside the folded panels. I have chosen two examples of this special capacity, because it is the less established approach toward the triptych as a symbolic structure.

³⁴ Huizinga, *Herbst des Mittelalters*, p. 214.

³⁵ Wilkins, 'Opening the Doors to Devotion'.

³⁶ Wilkins, 'Opening the Doors to Devotion', p. 376.

³⁷ Wilkins, 'Opening the Doors to Devotion'.

³⁸ Cf. Rimmele, *Das Triptychon als Metapher, Körper und Ort*, pp. 50–51.

All this leads to the following questions: How are its qualities of active staging, the variability, the immersive and sheltering potential, and the implicit symbolic forms of time all played out in a single triptych? How do the structural and pictorial solutions relate to the religious concepts of time, and how do triptychs manage to connect these — through their imagery — with the individual experience of the beholder or his desires as a religious subject? What aspects are bound up with the moment of reception, and what seems to work independently of any onlooker? How do these aspects relate to each other? Considering the conceptual openness of this exploration, it seems more appropriate not to philosophize about ‘the triptych’ but rather to start with some close readings, selecting examples that are as diverse as possible. The chosen time around 1500 aligns our findings with most of the other studies in this book, and may generate some unforeseen but valuable cultural insights simply by forming a historical cross-section with them. Moreover, from a subject-oriented point of view, the turn of the century is interesting because all the earlier explorations of the triptych’s potential were already at hand for the late masters, ready to be compiled, subtly varied, mocked or otherwise commented on.³⁹ Quentin Massys and the Master of the St Bartholomew Altarpiece are both outstanding examples of this tendency to collect and think through a variety of traditions while creating the most fitting concept for their actual task.

Massys’s Saint Anne Triptych

By around 1500, Antwerp had already become the city of art merchandise. Many, many triptychs and carved retables were produced on spec, often as serial productions.⁴⁰ But nevertheless there was room for highly interesting inventions, such as Quentin Massys’s *St Anne* triptych for the corresponding confraternity in Louvain, today preserved in Brussels (Figs 2.1 and 2.2).⁴¹ Massys creates a coherent program which falls back on patterns from Dieric Bouts and Hugo van der Goes, to name just the prototypes of the inner wings.⁴² But his special

³⁹ Cf. the history of the Early Netherlandish triptych as outlined by Jacobs, *Opening Doors*; additional aspects are to be found in Rimmele, *Das Triptychon als Metapher, Körper und Ort*.

⁴⁰ Jacobs, *Opening Doors*, p. 221.

⁴¹ Quentin Massys, *Saint Anne* triptych, 1509, c. 224.5 × 401.8 cm (opened), oil on panel, Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels. Cf. Silver, *The Paintings of Quinten Massys with Catalogue Raisonné*, pp. 43–45, 199–204; Jacobs, *Opening Doors*, pp. 234–238.

⁴² Dieric Bouts, *Moses before the Burning Bush*, Philadelphia, Johnson collection, and

reformulation of the scenes betrays an earnest interest in the potential of his format. A typical feature of the sixteenth-century triptych is the introduction of curvilinear shapes, which creates the potential to make the product appear, as the case may be, more organic (resembling an opened human abdomen),⁴³ architectonic, or simply more interesting in a semiotic sense.⁴⁴ As with many other features, the prototype for this may be the famous *Ghent Altarpiece*, followed in a local tradition by Joos van Ghent's *Calvary Triptych* (c. 1467–69), which is still housed in the same cathedral as his predecessor (Fig. 2.3). Both use the upper semi-circular extensions of the frame as a space to populate with heavenly figures as well as Old Testament prophets or prefigurations.⁴⁵ This leads to an instructive folding effect, not only in the *Ghent Altarpiece*, where Adam and Eve, representing fallen mankind, come together in front of their judging Godhead at the end of (reception-) time, but also in Joos van Ghent's subsequent invention: the central figures of Christ and his father are emphasized by the arches and the blue skies, prompting the viewer to imagine them being folded onto each other in the closed state of the triptych. This dynamic is further reinforced on a purely geometric level: two incomplete halves reunite in the full semicircle around Christ when closed. The implicit rhetorics of the new shape turn out to be far more suggestive of an imagined folding than the more neutral rectilinear type. It is somehow surprising but makes soteriological sense that Christ is central and God only part of his 'explanation'. The other part of the semicircle (on the right wing) is filled by a renowned Old Testament prefiguration of Christ on the cross. This heightens the oddity of the whole concept, but makes perfect sense on its own. The brazen serpent fits exactly onto the silhouette of Christ's arm, thus condensing the main message of the whole triptych with its two prefigurations of the central salvation. Compared to the aforementioned options for superimposing Christ and his prefigurations or imitators, we are now confronted with different times literally folded onto each other, thus offering a deepened perspective on the implications of salvific history's events, but one that is not accessible to visual perception.

Hugo van der Goes, *Death of the Virgin*, Bruges, Groeninge Museum; see Silver, *The Paintings of Quinten Massys with Catalogue Raisonné*, p. 203, pls 11 and 12.

⁴³ See, for example, Joachim Patinir's disturbing paralleling of the triptych's outline and Christ's ribcage in his *Saint Jerome* triptych (c. 1518), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

⁴⁴ For the spread of the new shape, cf. Jacobs, *Opening Doors*, p. 223.

⁴⁵ For this phenomenon, see also Thürlemann, 'Die Miniatur und ihr Jenseits'.

Massys has developed his own approach to the new shape. First of all, we recognize his parallel interpretation of the circular extensions as ‘heavenly’. They enclose not Christ or God in the middle but rather a discreet symbol, a window in the central cupola which seems a little at odds with the perspectival construction.⁴⁶ The window enforces the idea of the cupola — and thus the building as a whole — standing for heaven, articulated in three dimensions through the architecture but also in two dimensions by the triple-curved frame. A notion of Trinity might be included on this level of interpretation. But more than this, we tend to understand the whole central panel as a heavenly temple, a place where saintly people dwell in eternity, having become part of the strict ornamental structure.⁴⁷ They seem to define arches, pillars, and columns in a perspective that is unchangeable and thus out of time. Joseph, Joachim, and the two bridegrooms Alphaeus and Zebedee cannot be imagined doing anything other than being positioned exactly where they are, behind the balustrade, in front of the central pillars or with their hands on the capitals of the smaller ones that lead to the two sisters of Mary with their children. Joseph and his father-in-law mark the pillars that bear the central vault, while Mary and her mother seem to be allocated to the smaller arch that appears pictorially more distant. This entanglement of people, architecture, and frame also provides opportunities to subtly stress certain points — for example, making Anne bow forward a little detaches her from the architecture and awards her pride of place as the main character. A mountain that aligns with her inclining head provides further emphasis, although the centre of it all is of course the infant Christ. The frame not only defines the central lines and proportions of the architecture, it even substitutes for parts of it. This can be observed on the two shadowy lateral vaults, which lack a front comparable to the central one. The frame takes over here and strengthens its connection with the architecture to the extreme, becoming a kind of portal. One important effect of such strategic morphing between architecture and frame, between depicted heaven and material triptych, is that the saints somehow reside inside the wooden construction: they live behind its doors in the brotherhood’s chapel in the church of St Peter in Louvain.

⁴⁶ Subverting the perspectival system to allude to the higher reality of God is also a popular strategy in depictions of the Annunciation; cf. Arasse, *L’Annonciation italienne*, esp. pp. 188–206.

⁴⁷ Silver, *The Paintings of Quinten Massys with Catalogue Raisonné*, p. 39, also adds that the ‘extraordinary imported forms of the building serve to create a special zone of sacrality’.

The wings seem far more unstable, creating a dynamic outward and upward motion, which is reinforced by the posture of the characters, in particular on the left wing. Moreover, Massys echoes the two curves of the frame in the angel's wings, thus alluding to one possible term for the altarpiece shutter: *vleugel*.⁴⁸ (Bernhard van Orley adopted and even doubled this motif some years later in his Kassel *Standing Saints* triptych, c. 1518.)⁴⁹

The lack of stability in the wings has its counterpart on the level of content: on the right, there is a scene in which Anne's soul leaves the earth, surrounded by historically plausible mourning family members and Christ (as a teenager) giving a blessing;⁵⁰ on the left, a man caught in the moment of falling to his knees at the very end of his journey out to the wilderness, away from civilization and his worried wife ('abscessit de templo domini plorans, et non est reversus in domum suam, sed abiit ad pecora sua et duxit secum pastores inter montes in longinquam terram').⁵¹ When the altarpiece is closed, the implied movement of Anne's soul, outward and upward along the vector of the wing's soaring frame, will change direction and lead instead straight toward the stability of the central panel.⁵² The window — always a strong symbol in early Netherlandish painting⁵³ — is itself aligned with the outline of the frame through foreshortening and shadowing of the chamber, thereby reflecting the function of the shutters, like the angel's wings on the other side. This is felt even more strongly when we realize that a curtain has been pulled aside in front of

⁴⁸ 'Vleugel' (literally meaning a wing) is not the most frequent, but one possible term for the wings of an altarpiece in Germany and the Netherlands; cf. Huth, *Künstler und Werkstatt der Spätgotik*, pp. 108–39 for evidence from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; see also Jacobs, *Opening Doors*, p. 3 (pointing out that this term is rare and more widely used in the seventeenth century).

⁴⁹ See Jacobs, *Opening Doors*, p. 233, fig. 112.

⁵⁰ Jacobs, *Opening Doors*, p. 237, erroneously describes two men peeping through the window. They are Joseph (weeping) and Alphaeus with his flamboyant hat, standing in front of it as members of the mourning family.

⁵¹ The Latin citations follow the so called Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew ('Liber de ortu beatae Mariae et infantia Salvatoris', ed. by Tischendorf, p. 55), which is the text most frequently used from the early Middle Ages on to provide details on the life of Mary's parents. Around 1480, with the boom of confraternities dedicated to her, the first legends of Anne were written, but they also draw heavily on that source, as did the *Legenda Aurea* before them. Cf. Dörfler-Dierken, *Die Verehrung der heiligen Anna*, pp. 83, 121–24, 144.

⁵² I thank Anna Brailovsky for making this clear to me.

⁵³ See, for example, Gottlieb, 'Respiens per Fenestras'; Belting and Kruse, *Die Erfindung des Gemäldes*, pp. 74–79; Schlie, *Bilder des Corpus Christi*, pp. 262–65.

the window. By providing the soul a transit both out of the picture and into the central panel, it emphatically exposes the paradoxical spatial structures of foldable pictorial fields. On the central panel, the mother of Mary dwells together with her daughter and grandson, who is even younger than in the moment of her death. Furthermore, she is portrayed in the same space with both her first husband Joachim and the adult daughters from the second and third marriage after his death as well. Such deliberate compression of distinct times has two interesting effects: it creates a glimpse into the eternity of heaven, and, by keeping the almighty Christ a child, it not only points out theologically important genealogical relations, but even activates them in favour of the beholder. Many sources of the early sixteenth century claim that as his grandmother, Anne has enormous intercessory power due to the task of honouring one's parents. This claim is greatly strengthened when, by pictorial fortune, Christ stays her little grandson forever. As a child, he is not judging but devoutly obeying his mother, whereas she in turn always listens to Anne, both of them following the fourth commandment.⁵⁴ The depicted 'frozen' constellation is perfectly apt for intercessory needs.⁵⁵ The material dimension should not be forgotten in this: 'In short, both the landscape and the architecture are the outgrowth of the presence of the holy figures; they are locations but also attributes that identify the sanctity and prestige of the figures.'⁵⁶ As we have seen, the triptych itself is a further outgrowth, inextricably linked with the architecture and the holiness that imbues it. As a kind of shrine, it paradoxically locates this eternal constellation in the here and now of Louvain, 1509, turning it into a powerful intercessory machine when it is activated through individual or collective devotion.

A second change in direction — a kind of 're-turn' — will also occur on the left side. Although Joachim wonders why he should ever return to his wife and the temple from which he has been cast out (on the outer wings, Fig. 2.1), in a turn of the page, a flap of the wing, so to speak, he will follow the gesture of

⁵⁴ Exodus 20. 12; Matthew 15. 4–6. Cf. the sixteenth-century sources in Dörfler-Dierken, *Die Verehrung der heiligen Anna*, pp. 194–203, esp. 198: 'Im Himmel lebt die irdische Sippe Jesu in trauter Eintracht entsprechend denjenigen Geboten, die ihren irdischen Wandel bestimmt haben. Christus ist das gehorsame Enkelkind, dem die Wünsche seiner Großmutter Befehl sind' (In heaven, the earthly kin of Jesus live in perfect harmony in accordance with the commandments that had governed their earthly span. Christ is the obedient grandchild who obeys the wishes of his grandmother).

⁵⁵ Büttner, *Imitatio Pietatis*, esp. pp. 4–5; Schleif, 'Hands that Appoint, Anoint and Ally', p. 28; Pochat, *Bild-Zeit*, II, 44.

⁵⁶ Silver, *The Paintings of Quinten Massys with Catalogue Raisonné*, p. 40.

the angel ('descende de montibus et revertere ad coniugem tuam'⁵⁷) and return to the city he left behind, where we see a tiny representation of the two meeting at the Golden Gate. Through this change of direction, he will also return to the centre, becoming a respected member of the heavenly temple. Joachim has followed the rocky way out of the picture plane to nearly face the viewer. The path goes on, but his right leg has been stopped by the rock, which can easily be interpreted as one of those Old Testament holy places, forerunners of the Christian altar. The viewer remembers Joachim offering his sacrifice before returning, and, it is said, the angel carrying it up to heaven: 'Factum est autem cum offerret Ioachim deo sacrificium, simul cum odore sacrificii quasi cum fumo perrexit angelus ad caelum.'⁵⁸ The humble man is granted the honour of priesthood (after some self-deprecating bargaining with the angel), which is noteworthy because of his expulsion from the altar. As the right exterior shows (Fig. 2.1), he was considered unworthy to even let the high priest offer in his name. One must further recall the possible setting of the opened triptych as a backdrop to the mass service. During mass an angel is also believed to take the Host to God, as expressed in the *supplices te rogamus* of the canon.⁵⁹ Thus the wing, when folded out, signifies the priest and the angel literally coming to the church to celebrate with the beholders in time and space, before returning to transcendence when the wing is folded in again.⁶⁰ The (angled) wings not only define real space in front of the retable but also imply a shift in time, from the represented past (or future) to the actual moment, which is liturgically defined as a re-actualization of another historical event, Christ's sacrifice. A remarkable exploitation of the three-dimensional configuration of the altarpiece, as well as of the differences in structural balance between its wings and centre!

The prototype for this scene, by Dieric Bouts, shows Moses confronted with the appearance of God in the Burning Bush. But Joachim is definitely (and deliberately) not oriented toward the angel, who is hovering straight over him. His eyeballs are pointing upwards, but he reveres something which is outside of the scene. I would strongly argue that the outward-facing gesture, which Massys deliberately altered from Bouts's astonishment into a more prayer-like manner, is roughly oriented toward two possible targets: first, toward the implied axis

⁵⁷ 'Liber de ortu beatae Mariae et infantia Salvatoris,' ed. by Tischendorf, p. 58.

⁵⁸ 'Liber de ortu beatae Mariae et infantia Salvatoris,' ed. by Tischendorf, p. 59.

⁵⁹ Jungmann, *Missarum Sollemnia*, II, 287–91.

⁶⁰ Jacobs registers a tendency to 'push [...] the space at the sides toward the viewer' in other triptychs of the early sixteenth century as well; *Opening Doors*, p. 233.

that runs from the altar to heaven in front of the triptych, particularly when the wings are positioned obliquely,⁶¹ and second, toward the Christ Child on the lap of his mother, when Joachim's shutter is closed, and moved back into the eternity of folded time. This second connection can even be understood as his near future, comparable to the transfer of the soul in the death of St Anne: The angel promised him a great gift from heaven, a fruit so precious that neither the prophets nor the saints had been awarded anything comparable since the beginning of time: 'quale numquam ab initio nec prophetae aut sancti habuerunt neque sunt habituri'.⁶² What is meant to designate the miraculous conception of Mary gains a new significance when the praying Joachim is folded onto the central group and thus made to permanently worship in prayer the ultimate fruit of his bloodline, who looks down on him while being presented a bunch of grapes by Anne. According to the words of the angel, he will also see his wife as 'blessed mother of eternal benediction' (et ipsa erit benedicta, et mater benedictionis aeternae constituetur).⁶³ Both will dwell on the centre panel together with their daughter in the temple, to which she was dedicated even before she was born: 'She will be dwelling in the temple of God and the Holy Ghost will be resting on her: and her beatitude will exceed all the other holy women. For no one will ever be able to say that there was a similiar woman before or after her in this aeon.' In this context, the outward orientation of Joachim, considered a compositional problem by Silver,⁶⁴ seems to be a narratively valid strategy, which conveys the idea of someone *leaving* his wife and the temple. And even more: the positioning of Joachim like this on the movable part additionally invites the onlooker to virtually flip the wing over and add Joachim's *return* to a higher temple — both the near future and the eternal dimension of the episode depicted.⁶⁵

If we also take into account the representations on the exterior of the wings (Fig. 2.1), the whole work becomes even more complex, narratively as well

⁶¹ Recent scholarship has favoured this kind of presentation in an increasing number of cases, cf. Jacobs, *Opening Doors*, pp. 144, 285 (n. 69) and 293 (n. 45).

⁶² 'Liber de ortu beatae Mariae et infantia Salvatoris', ed. by Tischendorf, p. 60.

⁶³ 'Liber de ortu beatae Mariae et infantia Salvatoris', ed. by Tischendorf, p. 58.

⁶⁴ Silver, *The Paintings of Quinten Massys with Catalogue Raisonné*, p. 43.

⁶⁵ Others, like Veit Stoss in his famous carved *Altarpiece of the Death of the Virgin* in Cracow, have also been inspired to create kinetic effects by the structural as well as verbal prominence of 'reversion' in the story. Stoss shows Joachim in the wilderness and, pivoted around 180 degrees, meeting his wife on his way back. Both figures even touch each other, thus heightening the revolving effect that suggests immediate returning. Cf. Dümpekmann, *Veit Stoss und das Krakauer Marienretabel*, p. 277.

as conceptually. The two exterior scenes do not conceptualize the difference between the outside and inside of the triptych in the traditional 'temporal' sense of announcement and fulfilment, generally marked by the Annunciation or the prophets.⁶⁶ Nonetheless, they exploit the symbolic structure of the triptych — not only in spatial terms but also heightened by the representation of distinct times, inevitably leading to broader temporal differentiations as well. At first sight, it seems to be a strictly narrative solution, ignoring established patterns by which the thresholds between different spaces are typically demarcated, for example by grisaille painting.⁶⁷ The left exterior panel presents Anne and Joachim as righteous and exemplary believers. They are shown giving alms to the poor in the lower background of the scene while handing over an opened chest and some documents to the high priest in the foreground. This refers to the fact that the well-off couple divided everything they earned into three and gave two-thirds to the poor and the temple service every year.⁶⁸ On the right shutter we meet Joachim again, twenty years later and still willing to offer, but this time his money is rejected and thrown to the ground by the same priest. Joachim is banned from the temple, which is symbolized by his movement away from the elevated altar step. The exterior paintings were particularly suitable as a field for the depiction of contemporary references, such as the newly built Antwerp cathedral in the left background or Massys's signature 'QUINTE METSYS SCREEF DIT 1509' on the document being handed to the priest, 'which possibly reproduces a donation of the artist himself to his children'.⁶⁹ It also seems plausible to consider the man looking out of the picture in the right-hand scene as a self-portrait.⁷⁰ By closely connecting the depicted acts of charity with his own life and the city he lived in, Massys implies that the scenes have a deeper meaning for the here and now of the spectators.

The most incisive moment in time is invoked by the coins falling in mid-air. It is the very moment when Joachim is rejected, thereby defining a kind of boundary to the sanctum, which not everyone may cross.⁷¹ This barrier co-

⁶⁶ Rimmele, *Das Triptychon als Metapher, Körper und Ort*, pp. 69–76.

⁶⁷ Narratively coherent, full-coloured exteriors are an innovation of the late fifteenth century and were particularly popular in the early sixteenth century; cf. Jacobs, *Opening Doors*, pp. 224–26.

⁶⁸ 'Liber de ortu beatae Mariae et infantia Salvatoris,' ed. by Tischendorf, pp. 54–55.

⁶⁹ Silver, *The Paintings of Quinten Massys with Catalogue Raisonné*, p. 42, for details, cf. Roberts, *De eeuw van Bruegel*, p. 137, no. 162.

⁷⁰ Silver, *The Paintings of Quinten Massys with Catalogue Raisonné*, p. 42.

⁷¹ Similar notions can be found in Jacobs, *Opening Doors*, p. 237.

incides with the doors in front of the 'inner temple' — the story elaborates the symbolic nature of the triptych. The depicted fall of the coins — something that occurs in the twinkling of an eye — presents the utmost temporal contrast with the eternal setting behind the shutters. The immediate impression of a single consistent place (actually two different areas of the temple are depicted) stresses the ageing of the recurring personages and as such the existence of a border between earth and heaven, although even the inner scenes are part of the same narration. Posited outside of the temporally defined border to the holy space, the onlookers reside in a sphere of worldly Christendom, where people obviously grow older, such as the high priest with his whitening hair or Joachim, who has a beard in the second scene. The trick of mirroring the space of the real church in front of the altar in the representation on the exterior of the triptych by means of a doubled (and at first glance, spatially congruent) temple scene reinforces understanding of the parallels between the narrative, with its examples of good and bad behaviour, and the real life of the members of the brotherhood (or the priest).

To sum up: both the differentiated depiction of time and the places that are shown underscore the symbolic qualities of the triptych, which become stronger than the coherence of the story. As a consequence, the shutters sharply divide two different domains, which are also declared to be two incommensurable time zones. Joachim as an exemplar is granted entrance, not to the outer temple, but to a higher one he has not even imagined before.⁷² The means to reach this goal are of special interest, as Larry Silver has convincingly pointed out, this time following the *Legenda Aurea*:

Voragine's text records the angelic message as paying special consideration to the good works of the holy couple: 'Thine almsworks have ascended in the sight of the Lord' [also in the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew⁷³]. This again was good news to the brothers of the confraternity, whose corporate charity was one of the hallmarks of their piety.⁷⁴

In short, we have been able to register a large number of functional syntheses between depicted time and space, religious temporal aspects and the structural

⁷² This is a theological argument as well: Christ and his church are seen as surpassing the synagogue, and Christ as the one and only high priest, as elaborated in the Epistle to the Hebrews. This might also be alluded to by the prominent position of the high priest in both exterior scenes.

⁷³ 'Liber de ortu beatae Mariae et infantia Salvatoris', ed. by Tischendorf, p. 60.

⁷⁴ Silver, *The Paintings of Quinten Massys with Catalogue Raisonné*, p. 44.

features of the triptych. Meeting on normal days, the members of the confraternity would be reminded by the closed doors (and the remembered interior) that the way to traverse the border to heaven is to continually perform good works. They literally saw the course of their lifetime trickling away and were confronted with positive and negative models, such as the exaggerated bystanders of the second scene.⁷⁵ On feast days, they were awarded a glimpse of eternity while experiencing the crossing of the boundary from the other side in the guise of Joachim and the angel, moving with the wing. This option potentially increased their awareness of the depths of liturgical time-shifting. Thus the wing with priest and angel relieves the central panel of the need for Eucharistic references: Despite the grapes and the goldfinch, the scene does not seem very 'sacrificial'.⁷⁶ Instead it proudly underlines the theological prominence of the patron saint and strengthens her intercessory power by its strategic selection of ages included in the compressed 'eternity'. The triptych defines a sacred space and thus provides the kind of materiality necessary for the confraternity to 'possess' this very space. Additional proleptic qualities of the foldable wings have also been noted: Joachim's enhanced connectivity, as implied by the wings, involves the beholder by stimulating his capacity for a kind of projective seeing while simultaneously evoking the entire edifying story in his mind. We see pictured time, structural as well as symbolic qualities of the triptych, and actual religious mediations interlocking in various constellations.

The Master of the Saint Bartholomew Altarpiece (and Workshop): Nativity with Donors

Whereas Massys presents himself as a strategic compiler and a specialist in blending, aiming to fulfil functional tasks as efficiently as possible, the Master of the Saint Bartholomew Altarpiece, a leading artist of the Cologne area around 1500, seems to be something of a joker.⁷⁷ We will see that he (and his

⁷⁵ Silver, *The Paintings of Quinten Massys with Catalogue Raisonné*, p. 41

⁷⁶ The symbols are discussed by Silver, *The Paintings of Quinten Massys with Catalogue Raisonné*, pp. 36 and 38. He mentions the 'true wine of the Eucharist' and, more prominently, 'the stem of His lineage' for the bunch of grapes. The finch potentially alludes to the spiritual elevation of the soul, the Resurrection and, being fastened with a tether, the 'incorporation of divine love into human form'. All the symbols in the picture 'amplify a single theme, the earthly mission of Christ and the miracle of His Incarnation' (p. 38).

⁷⁷ For more on this artist, see MacGregor, *A Victim of Anonymity*; Budde and Krischel, *Genie ohne Namen*.

assistants) also use established functional strategies of time compression and interplay between the structure of the physical support and the representation, but his stunning sense of reflection and critical mockery threatens to override the whole construction. Neil MacGregor has pointed out this special sense of humour and our anonymous Cologne master's 'game[s] about representation and about looking'.⁷⁸ My reconstructions of his variations on established patterns of triptych-painting have resulted in seeing him as a veritable theoretician with a special awareness of media issues.⁷⁹ He and his workshop laid bare the paradoxical effects implicit in the task of using a foldable support to create the convincing suggestion of a different space. Rogier van der Weyden is believed to have established the brilliant solution of painting living persons in a wooden shrine, thereby creating a visual paradox analogous to liturgy or complementary to transubstantiation, which was also beyond suspicion of inciting idolatry and provided the maximum emotional impact.⁸⁰ The Master of the Bartholomew Altarpiece pushed the concept to the limit by including landscape backgrounds and clamped curtains on the wings, thus revealing the inner paradoxes of triptych painting as such. There is no space here to delve into such cases as the Munich *Bartholomew Altarpiece*, or the Cologne *Kreuzaltar* or *Thomasretabel*, but there is one largely unnoticed object that goes even one step further and also reflects on the religious dimensions of its mediality. I would like to briefly consider this gem of artistic-intellectual engagement with questions of time,⁸¹ mainly because it involves some of the constellations mentioned at the start, which were not among the complex of features that define Massys's work: namely, a play with donor portraits, a supposedly private context, and self-reflexivity.

The preeminent feature of the opened interior of the small-scale triptych (Figs 2.4 and 2.5)⁸² is its prominent golden curtain, held up by two angels to

⁷⁸ MacGregor, *A Victim of Anonymity*, p. 44; cf. also Krischel, 'Der Meister des Bartholomäus-Altars', p. 17.

⁷⁹ Rimmele, *Das Triptychon als Metapher, Körper und Ort*, pp. 269–76, 298–305.

⁸⁰ For more on this notion, see, e.g., Belting and Kruse, *Die Erfindung des Gemäldes*, pp. 103–11; De Vos, *Flämische Meister*, p. 76; Marrow, 'Illusionism and Paradox', pp. 169–72.

⁸¹ I have interpreted the picture from a broader perspective and in more detail in Rimmele, *Das Triptychon als Metapher, Körper und Ort*, pp. 298–306.

⁸² Master of the Saint Bartholomew Altarpiece (workshop), *Nativity with Donors*, c. 1500–10, oil on panel, 3.15 × 20.6 cm (central panel), Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud. Cf. Zehnder, *Katalog der Altkölner Malerei*, pp. 447–50; Budde and Krischel, *Genie ohne Namen*, no. 123, p. 498.

enshrine the intimate scene of the praying mother, while isolating it from a background where we see the Annunciation to the shepherds in the centre and the Magi approaching from the sides, ready to meet. We could also say that Mary praying to the child is cut out of historical time to facilitate the veneration of the beholder. Moreover, any further progression is deliberately omitted, as in a kind of loop. Mary prays to her child twenty-four hours a day, in the opened as well as closed condition of the triptych. This scene is predestinated for intercessory desires even more than Massys's iconography. Everyone in front of the picture can tap into this already established channel of divine communication and send his own requests via Mary to Christ. Authors like Bernhard of Clairvaux assure us that he (Christ) will necessarily be faithful to his mother.⁸³ Many occasions demonstrate that this kind of 'capturing' of a historical scene was done frequently, in particular through the insertion of praying donors, for example, in books of hours.⁸⁴ Further, the motif of the cloth of honour behind Mary seems to have been ingeniously blended with the archaistic concept of gold ground and the potentially self-reflexive figure of doubling the wings with curtains.⁸⁵ The allusion to gold ground might well be considered a daring play with the older concept of an isolated icon of Mary positioned in a heavenly nowhere. We see the angels, God's 'communication technicians',⁸⁶ preparing this archaistic type of picture for us, not just shutting out historical time but somehow also taking us back to the days of miraculous icons — 'when wishing still helped', so to speak — as an act of grace. The prominent shadow of Mary in the very centre of the whole picture strengthens our notion of self-reflexive implications, triggering questions of legitimacy and true pictorial representation.⁸⁷ Birgitta of Vadstena, the popular saint whose visions influenced the change in the iconographic formula of the Nativity from childbed to motherly adoration of the naked newborn on the ground, also spoke of the supernatural glow of the Christ Child.⁸⁸ Thus we might — in some abstraction of the actual disposition in the picture — assume that Mary is 'allowed' to cast a shadow (that is, to be accessible by means of pictures) by the light of God, which is the

⁸³ Walz, *Die Fürbitte der Heiligen*, esp. p. 162.

⁸⁴ See n. 58 above. Cf. also Gelfand and Gibson, 'Surrogate Selves'.

⁸⁵ For a discussion of the significance of curtains on triptychs, and further references on the topic, see Rimmele, *Das Triptychon als Metapher, Körper und Ort*, pp. 77–84.

⁸⁶ Held, *Engel: Geschichte eines Bildmotivs*, p. 10.

⁸⁷ Cf. Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow*, pp. 11–20, 44–46.

⁸⁸ Cf. Thürlemann, *Robert Campin*, p. 40.

original source of Grace. Or are we reminded that any picture can only be a shadow of the real thing? In any case it is worth considering that the depicted prayer 'VIRGO + MATER + AVE' deliberately changes direction after having reached Mary's shadow. The inscription then carefully follows the shadow's contours, thereby underlining its significance while adding the question of the efficacy of (painted?) prayer to it.⁸⁹

Another aspect to consider is the similarity of the cloth of honour to the curtains on the wings. If they are understood as one and the same kind of textile, a certain Andreas and his wife Kathrin, together with their name saints, have managed — with the artist's help — to enter the same ephemeral space as the mother of God and her newborn child. With respect to the tradition as reconstructed by Lynn F. Jacobs, we might think of the gaps between the wings and the centre as spatiotemporal gutters, signalling the fact that the contemporaries only manage to be there thanks to imaginative prayer.⁹⁰ Thus one could argue that the threshold is contested but remains somehow intact. The higher positioning of the lateral curtains, creating a subtle break, might be a case in point, as is the fact that the backgrounds depict a different time of day: while the Nativity happens in the dark of night, the wings appear to show dawn or dusk. But regardless of all these subtle demarcations, there is no uncertainty at all that their son, who seems to have been the effective owner of this small-scale prayer device, kneels on the same ground as Mary, touched by her son's radiating halo.⁹¹ Has the 'miraculous threshold', so typical of early Netherlandish painting's conception of the wings, been completely dismissed here, in the central panel? Has all subtlety been abandoned to please some German donors (the only ones who made the workshop insert a prayer into a painting)? Of course there are other traditions as well, such as the *Rolin Madonna* by Jan van Eyck and the so called *Bladelin-Altarpiece* by Rogier van der Weyden, which can be taken as paradigms for such daring strategies. In the end it is always, like here, the slightly oblique gaze of the praying person, which provides the ultimate evidence for the fact that two different times have been fused to represent and ignite a devout imagination.⁹² But in this case, even the very procedure,

⁸⁹ Cf. my remarks on the efficacy of painted avatars in late medieval pictures in Rimmele, *Das Triptychon als Metapher, Körper und Ort*, pp. 287–305.

⁹⁰ Jacobs, *Opening Doors*, esp. pp. 40–43, 65–67, 122–28.

⁹¹ For the central figure, cf. Zehnder, *Katalog der Altkölner Malerei*, p. 448, with references to older literature.

⁹² Jacobs, *Opening Doors*, p. 93; Harbison, 'Visions and Meditations in Early Flemish Painting', pp. 100–01.

which seems to enhance the donors' approach, adds a highly interesting level of media-reflection, which might imply a unique distancing moment, maybe even the same kind of irony as the ad hoc production of an icon in the centre.

The whole concept of staging the curtains must be considered ingenious insofar as it solves most of the problems of the variability of the wings: a space inside clamped curtains may have any shape, may include any possible angle without becoming 'wrong'. At the same time this solution exposes these problems and takes them to another level of meaning. Mary, as we have seen, is at the same time displayed 'on' and treasured 'inside' the textile behind her, which becomes a kind of metaphor for the triptych itself as plane *and* shrine. Of course she is also 'on' and 'inside' the triptych, depending on its open or closed state. The angels, so it seems, have just opened the cloth with its minutely rendered creases. In this special setting, the typical creases lose their conventionality and regain the function they once possessed in the early days of the *ars nova*: 'Since the creases of the cloth imply a recent past, its optical appeal is inflected by a cognitive (as opposed to purely visual) dimension.'⁹³ They inaugurate a sense of a recently performed process, what Alfred Acres calls 'small physical history', which in some cases creates a heightened sense of the here and now as a distinctive foreseen moment of reception. Referring to a symbolic Crucifixion of Rogier van der Weyden (Philadelphia), he elaborates:

It is, moreover, a past seeming to belong at least as much to the viewer as to the biblical figures, because the wall and cloths come across more as presentational equipment of the painting itself than as artefacts of a moment on Calvary. The fabrics seem to have been unfolded and draped for our eyes, and not that long ago.⁹⁴

In our case, the motif is even more intriguing, because the cloth has been positioned parallel to the foldable triptych. The angels might fold the fabric together just as the onlooker might fold the picture itself. Reception time thus becomes something like a heavenly gift, ephemeral like the segregated space in front of the textile.

Mary's juvenile adorer has been granted access *into* this ephemeral space, which mirrors the fact that he has been allowed to be 'on' the picture, a notion reinforced by the very peculiar constellation of shadow and prayer described above. The curtains on the wings, then, align with the cloth of honour but are visibly divided from it. While we see the ends of the cloth carried by the angels,

⁹³ Acres, 'Small Physical History', p. 16.

⁹⁴ Acres, 'Small Physical History', p. 17.

the curtains seem to hover somehow behind the donors without visibly ending anywhere. This means that they could well be one and the same textile, running through *in front* of the Nativity when the triptych is closed. As such they would make up a second frontier for the enclosed space, which coincides with the real space inside the closed triptych itself. Understood in this manner, the indicators of different times and places such as the height level of the curtains or the (connectable!) backgrounds of the wings would turn into means of creating a more or less seamless virtual reality. Everything is designed so that the donor couple and the objects of their reverence can dwell together without hindrance — inside the closed triptych, when no one can see it. And if we assume that they also commissioned the triptych for their son, as an instrument of remembrance and intercessory prayer on behalf of their souls after death, we can imagine the whole family dwelling reunited in a timeless heterotopia, venerating Christ together. The folded time inside the triptych could be understood as a kind of preliminary heaven, a place to dwell and to qualify for ultimate salvation through prayer. It might have been considered even more efficient that prayer is already literally part of this enclosed virtual world, and does not necessarily have to be added from outside. We see the solution to an artistic problem, a medium-specific form of picture theory, and a kind of highly efficient manipulation of time for potential religious benefit merging together, or better: we see them superimposed while ceaselessly clashing with each other. The ideas sketched out above regarding the closed triptych as a second heaven or even a potential ‘prayer machine’ are severely undermined by the fact that the notion of the triptych as an ephemeral space between the curtains is combined with self-reflexive elements (such as the shadow on the golden, foldable carrier) thus culminating in one radical statement: the only place where all this can happen, where living and dead and heavenly people may unite in a certain scenery of salvific history, is inside a picture; to be precise, inside a folding triptych. This kind of painted argument betrays the pride of a *métier* and a full awareness of all the struggles of the fifteenth century to come to terms with this ‘obstinate’ format. The solution it offers is highly elegant. It is also breathtakingly meaningful, but it implies, at least from our point of view today, such an intellectual distance that any viewer who really understood it could hardly have believed in its efficacy at the same time. While Massys used his position as a late master to compile and optimize media-specific knowledge, attaining an admirable functional peak of craftsmanship, the anonymous inventor of the second object seems to have been one step ahead, using the triptych’s time folds to create Art for its own sake. Both in their own way allow us to see the complex medial constellations in which the triptych was understood to work at the time.

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PRESENCE AS DISPLAY: CARVED ALTARPIECES ON THE THRESHOLD TO ETERNITY

Britta Dümpelmann

As ‘windows to divine salvation’ and ‘media of revelation’, winged retables stand on the threshold to the eternal hereafter beyond all time.¹ They make manifest, in this temporally bound world, a slice of the timeless beyond, and thus mediate not only between heavenly and earthly space but also between heavenly and earthly time. But the earthly present of the beholder can only be enriched by a momentary slice of divine eternity: it cannot be entirely subsumed by it. As close as the winged retables may bring the viewer to heavenly time, the two temporal levels must always remain separable by means of some form of mediality.²

My case study of the St Mary’s Altarpiece by Veit Stoss in Cracow (Figs 3.1 and 3.2) takes as its starting point the representational traditions of the genre, which were established during the fourteenth century, and investigates the complex problematic of temporality around 1500 with specific reference to the carved retable. Given that sculpture naturally has the capacity to create a far

¹ For the notion of the retable as a window to divine salvation, see Laabs, ‘Das Retabel als “Schaufenster” zum göttlichen Heil’; for the medium of revelation, see Rimmele, *Das Triptychon als Metapher, Körper und Ort*, pp. 48, 61 and 80ff.

² For the interweaving of temporal levels in winged retables, see especially Reudenbach, ‘Der Altar als Bildort’, p. 29ff. An additional third level is liturgical time, which unfortunately cannot be discussed in the context of this essay.

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Figure 3.1a. Veit Stoss, High Altar Retable of the Cracow Basilica of St Mary, 1477–89, closed. Cracow, Church of Our Lady Assumed into Heaven. Hirmer Fotoarchiv München.

more immediate sense of presence, and can thus come much nearer than painting to the viewer's own reality, the sculptural medium brings this problematic to an absolute pinnacle of aesthetic and dramaturgical effect at the centre of the retable. Since the earliest beginnings of retable construction, there has been an artistic tradition which ensured that the sculpture remained at a temporal and spatial distance from the viewer. During the course of the fifteenth century, however, we can observe how it began to seek greater proximity to the audience — now presenting itself with considerably less severity, and even turning its attention to more modest acts.

This development reached an impressive climax in the retable completed by the south German sculptor Veit Stoss between 1477 and 1489, for the high altar of St Mary's Basilica in Cracow.³ In this gigantic *theatrum sacrum*, the Death, Assumption, and Coronation of the Virgin is staged to such a powerfully immersive effect that the spatial and temporal distance to the viewer appears to be completely eliminated. This brilliant display gains even more explosive power through the fact that Veit Stoss chose to represent, at the centre of the Cracow retable, the Assumption of the Mother of God in body and soul — a subject of contentious and intense theological debate at the time. A review of the relevant Polish texts shows that the specific matter under discussion here was the Immaculate Conception as the precondition for Mary's Assumption in body and soul, while the decisive step of the argument was in fact demonstrated in the carved image of Cracow's parish church itself.⁴ The Cracow Assumption is one of the earliest representations of the subject north of the Alps since Cimabue's Assumption in Assisi (fresco cycle of the life of the Virgin in the Upper Church, c. 1270), and it is perhaps the first time ever that it was depicted in sculpture, already a tricky enough medium in itself.⁵ The themes of the Cracow pictorial program, then, revolve around the leitmotif of embodiment and disembodiment, and are played out in the here and now of the Cracow Basilica as a process of plastic pictorial realization. How would it have been possible for the beholder to still differentiate between divine and earthly time in this imposing display, and what are the implications of this kind of mediality for the way issues of temporality were dealt with around 1500 in Cracow?

³ Dümpelmann, *Veit Stoss und das Krakauer Marienretabel*.

⁴ Dümpelmann, *Veit Stoss und das Krakauer Marienretabel*, pp. 138–43.

⁵ Skubiszewski, 'Der Stil des Veit Stoss', pp. 103ff.; Stubblebine, 'Cimabue's Frescoes of the Virgin', p. 330.



Figure 3.1b. Veit Stoss, High Altar Retable of the Cracow Basilica of St Mary, 1477–89, open. Cracow, Church of Our Lady Assumed into Heaven. Hirmer Fotoarchiv München.

Medial Presence and the Conditions in which Retable Sculpture Emerged

Sculpture as such already stands substantially closer to the present reality of the beholder than painting, simply by virtue of its mediality. Unlike painting, which must resort to clever perspectival techniques and the painterly illusion of plasticity in order to artificially produce the impression of three-dimensional bodies in space, sculpture commands — as a naturally given, fundamental quality of the medium — a high degree of realism while simultaneously heightening its spatial presence.⁶ Due to its presentness, sculpture is the ideal medium to bridge the gap between heavenly and earthly time. But as close as it may come to the viewer's space and time, a minimal temporal distance must not be eliminated. Countless scenes of destruction bear witness to the fact that sculpture has come under attack from those hostile to images, due to the purported greater danger of confusing the representation with the original. The essential medial quality of its immediate, and to some degree troublingly real presence is the origin of a continuous theological dispute with the three-dimensional medium (and also led painters to denigrate sculpture in the *paragone* debate because it demanded a lesser effort of abstraction on the part of the artist).

With its potential palpability, sculpture directs itself primarily to the viewer's sense of touch, which is irrevocably connected to his or her presence, while painting — notwithstanding the great effort of translating tactility into two dimensions — speaks first of all to vision. The primacy of touch over sight, as well as the other senses, can be traced back to Aristotle, who considered the sense of touch to be 'the root and foundation of all senses'.⁷ The embodied sensuality of touch may have set it apart from the other senses, but at the same time this made it dangerously seductive. In the High Middle Ages, the sense of touch had strong sexual connotations.⁸ But if one could be sure that its

⁶ Körner, 'Die enttäuschte und die getäuschte Hand', p. 221; Wenderholm, *Bild und Berührung*, pp. 52, 59ff.

⁷ Largier, 'Gefährliche Nähe', p. 45; see also Wenderholm, *Bild und Berührung*, p. 111, n. 144.

⁸ For instance, in a text by Jacopone da Todi around 1300, in which the human soul is compared with an innocent maiden, the girl possesses a stone that represents her free will. This precious stone is, however, constantly in danger from her five brothers, the five senses. The worst of the brothers is Touch, a whoremonger who tries to tempt his sister into sinful behaviour in shameful places; cf. Körner, 'Der fünfte Bruder', p. 166. This may be compared with Leonardo's notes for the *Paragone*, in which he described *tactus* as the big brother of *visus*, and all sensory acts as a form of touching; cf. Wenderholm, *Bild und Berührung*, p. 111. For the ambivalence of sculpture and its sensory orientation toward touch, see also Hinz, 'Statuenliebe', and Krischel, 'Mediensynthesen', p. 119.



Figure 3.2a. High Altar Retable of St Jacob's Church, 1402, closed. Göttingen, St Jacob's Church

seductive danger had been eliminated, then it was seen as the most successful and immediate means of conveying salvation. The Franciscan Ugo Panziera, a contemporary of Giotto, recommended that when contemplating images (of Christ) viewers should form a *phantasma* in their imagination and place it before their inner eye with as much reality as a sculpture. In this way, Christ would first become inscribed in the thoughts and imagination of the beholder; then he would be drawn (*disegnato*) and shaded, coloured and filled out; and finally, he would appear in the imagination of the faithful embodied fully in three dimensions (*rilevato*).⁹

How potent the central shrine of a retable was considered to be as a reflection of the heavenly realm is par-



⁹ Summers, *The Judgement of Sense*, p. 313; also Hamburger, 'Seeing and Believing', p. 53.



Figure 3.2b. High Altar Retable of St Jacob's Church, 1402, first stage. Göttingen, St Jacob's Church.

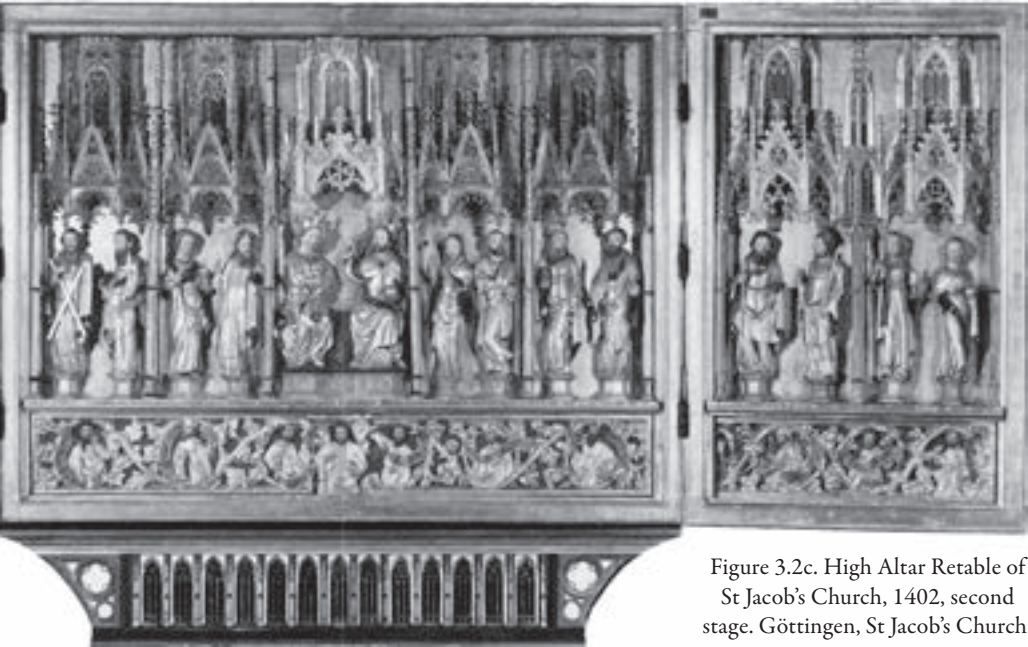


Figure 3.2c. High Altar Retable of St Jacob's Church, 1402, second stage. Göttingen, St Jacob's Church.

Source: Carqué and Röcklein, *Das Hochaltarretabel der St. Jacobi-Kirche in Göttingen*, folded, pls 1–3.

ticularly evident in the fact that the wings of a retable were opened for those who were condemned to death, before they were led to confession and given last rites.¹⁰ Naturally, such a strong visual effect, particularly in the medium of sculpture, would have to be strictly controlled. The preciousness and uniqueness of this foretaste of the divine *visio* had to remain a singular moment, distinct from one's own earthly temporality — which demanded the institutional regulation of access to and visibility of the retable on the one hand, and an appropriate artistic form on the other.

A common principle established early on in the development of retable construction was that as one moved from the outward edges of the altar toward the centre, the techniques and materials used gradually intensified: the exterior portions were frequently brightly painted and narrative in intent, and the interior of the wings formed in relief. What awaited the beholder within the shrine at its most climactic point of aesthetic perception and impact was a precious sculpture covered in gold leaf (see Fig. 3.3).¹¹ This progressive rise in material value from the outside in went hand in hand with a spatial and temporal withdrawal into the innermost sanctum of the shrine, which counteracted the effect of immediate presence created by the sculptural medium.

Along with the aim of withdrawing into a different spatial and temporal realm, certain basic artistic representational principles emerged: the stereotypical lining up of figures, architectonic integration (i.e., the sculptures were placed in niches and in part also connected to the background of the retable), and a uniform membrane of gold covering both sculpture and ground. There is neither action (at the most, a greatly curtailed gesture or expression) nor spatial orientation to allow the audience to identify too strongly with the sculptures sheltered within the corpus of the retable.¹² The disciplining of the gaze was secured, as it were, through the disciplining of sculpture itself. The powerful immediacy and presentness inherent in the medium could only be allowed to manifest themselves as mediated. The retable sculpture appears to be within arm's reach, and yet in its ambivalent character as a virtual vision, it remains at

¹⁰ There is evidence of this custom in connection with the retable for the high altar of the Dominican Cloister in Lübeck, dedicated to the condemned in 1418. See Kobler and Wolf, 'Flügelretabel', col. 1478; see also Tripps, 'Studien zur Wandlung', p. 118.

¹¹ Fuchß, *Das Altarensemble*, p. 206; Suckale, 'Der mittelalterliche Kirchenbau', p. 22; Wolf, *Deutsche Schnitzretabel*, p. 301; Kahsnitz, *Die großen Schnitzaltäre*, pp. 14–16.

¹² Decker, 'Die spätgotische Plastik als Kultbild'; Decker, *Das Ende des mittelalterlichen Kultbildes*; Decker, 'Reform within the Cult Image'; Wolf, 'Deutsche Schnitzretabel', p. 368; Wenderholm, *Bild und Berührung*, pp. 74–78.



Figure 3.3. Michel Erhart, Jörg Syrlin the Younger, Bartholomäus Zeitblom, and others, High Altar of the former Abbey Church of St John in Blaubeuren, completed in 1494. Moraht-Fromm, *Das Kloster Blaubeuren*, p. 218.



Figure 3.4. Rogier van der Weyden, *Deposition*. c. 1435.
 Madrid, Museo del Prado. Borchert, *Van Eyck bis Dürer*, p. 436, fig. 2.

a distance. It seems to share the viewer's space and time, yet ultimately eludes him. The process of display made possible within the shrine of the retable under these conditions thus remains a self-consciously delimited one. It subordinates itself to the powerful effect of the sculpture, while focusing entirely on the task of keeping sculpture's naturally occurring effects of presence under control, and disciplining the gaze of the beholder.

Most probably in connection with the evolution of devotional needs in the course of the fifteenth century, especially in southern Germany, retable sculpture began to develop in a way that allowed it to gradually set aside its tightly bound architectonic corset and transcend the spatial and temporal limits that had been set for it. The concept of the three- or five-figure shrine that was popular in this phase made it possible to concentrate on a few select sculptures, which had grown to full human scale and allowed for substantially greater proximity to the viewer (see Fig. 3.4).¹³ This development came to an impres-

¹³ Wildenhof, 'Der Wandel des Schnitzaltares', pp. 23–27; Zimmermann, *Der spätgotische Schnitzaltar*, p. 22; Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors*, pp. 62–69 (for the three- or five-figure shrine, see p. 69); Kahsnitz, *Die großen Schnitzaltäre*, p. 26ff.; Dümpelmann, *Veit Stof und das Krakauer Marienretabel*, p. 43, n. 171.

sive, in some ways unsurpassed, culmination in the retable for the high altar of St Mary's Basilica in Cracow, which Veit Stoss completed between 1477 and 1489. Here, for the first time, the south German sculptor designed a unified, strongly dramatized scene within the shrine, which traverses the bounds not only of the shrine's frame but of the entire architecture of the retable as a whole, and encroaches into the space of the church. Along a soaring vertical axis that originally reached upward some sixteen to eighteen metres (the superstructure is greatly reduced today, and was once significantly taller and more sweeping), the sculptor staged the Death, Assumption, and Coronation of the Virgin Mother as both a dramatic event and a glittering celebration. The multilayered effects of presentness produce such a strong immersive effect that the event of the Assumption seems virtually to be occurring in the here and now of the Cracow Basilica. In this imposing visual display, one would seek in vain for any measures to discipline sculpture, and with it the gaze — at least at first glance.

The All-Over Display of the St Mary Retable

Veit Stoss blows the medium of sculpture up to a monumental scale, dramatizes the narration performed by it and stages this immersive *theatrum sacrum* as an all-over display that encroaches into the space of the church. Space and time form such a strong unity that the observer can hardly fail to become part of the divine events staged in the here and now of Saint Mary's Basilica, with Stoss's retable as its liturgical and compositional centre. The scenes depicted, revolving around the themes of embodiment and disembodiment, are not performed as having just happened but as happening right now, a slight but important shift in emphasis which involves the viewer as a witness to the transformation from immanence to transcendence — and back again.

When the retable is opened, the gaze of the viewer falls immediately on the kneeling, dying Mary, surrounded by the apostles, who have hurried from all corners of the world to be at the side of the Mother of God in her last moments. The iconography of representing Mary kneeling in her final prayer rather than lying in bed was very widespread in Bohemia, Silesia, Poland, Hungary, Austria, and southern Germany.¹⁴ This iconographical tradition is also documented in contemporary textual sources such as the *Speculum historiale* of Vincent of

¹⁴ Török, 'Die Ikonographie', p. 151; Skubiszewski, 'Der Stil des Veit Stoß', p. 102; Gadowski, 'Ołtarz Mariacki 1477–1489', p. 42.

Beauvais.¹⁵ Prior to Veit Stoss, however, no other artist had ever composed a representation of the Death of the Virgin in a winged retable in such a form — surrounded by twelve larger-than-life apostles who reach up to 2.8 metres at the highest point — and with such narrative richness.¹⁶ Above this is the unique representation of the Assumption of the Virgin, body and soul, as discussed above, and the whole display is completed with Mary's coronation. Death, Assumption, and Coronation are therefore staged as Mary's progressive withdrawal — as stations of transition from immanence to transcendence.

The progression already begins with the Tree of Jesse in the predella, where a branch bores through the predella floor just below the Virgin Mother, and thereby marks her as the direct descendant of the House of David. With careful observation, it becomes clear that Mary is about to slip out of the grip of the bearded apostle who appears to support her: his right hand, laid over Mary's, is open, not closed; the Virgin Mother is thus about to sink to the ground at any moment.¹⁷ Another central situation of transition and a point of juncture lies in the beardless apostle who dramatically wrings his hands, lending the death scene a truly crowning conclusion.¹⁸ The stylistic comparison that is frequently drawn here with the hand-wringing Mary Magdalene from Rogier van der Weyden's *Deposition* falls short of the mark (Fig. 3.5).¹⁹ Magdalene's ges-

¹⁵ There is one copy of the *Speculum historiale* of Vincent of Beauvais in the possession of the Choir Vicar of St Mary's Basilica in Cracow, *Świętosław Milczący*, and another in the library of the royal Cathedral in Cracow: see Łodyńska-Kosińska, "Ingenium et labor", p. 142; Skowron, *Świętosław Milczący*, p. 475, and Ożóg, *Kultura umysłowa*, p. 117. The death of the Virgin Mother on her knees is also described in a sermon by the Franciscan Observant Pelbart of Temesvar: see Schreiner, *Maria*, p. 299ff., and Simon, *Der Creglinger Marienaltar*, p. 144ff.

¹⁶ Previously, the death of Mary at her last prayer was most frequently represented in painting and book illustration. An example of a sculptural Death of the Virgin group with a kneeling Mary is a clay work that survives in fragments in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg (c. 1400), which Loßnitzer had already connected with the Cracow shrine group: see Loßnitzer, *Veit Stoß*, p. 41; exhibition catalogue, *Die Apostel aus St. Jakob*, pp. 34–36, figs 33–35, and p. 77ff., cat. no. 15–18. See also the stone Maria-Schlaf-Altar in the Frankfurt Cathedral from 1434 to 1438; André, 'Konrad Kuene'.

¹⁷ Marcinkowski, 'Współodkupienie' i 'Zaślubiny', p. 44, follows older scholarship in identifying the middle apostle as Jacob. I have proposed identifying him as Paul: Dümpelmann, *Veit Stoß und das Krakauer Marienretabel*, pp. 117 and 149ff.

¹⁸ For the gesture of the apostle I have identified as John, see Kalinowski, 'Zalamane ręce' and Łodyńska-Kosińska, "Ingenium et labor", p. 144; Dümpelmann, *Veit Stoß und das Krakauer Marienretabel*, p. 117ff.

¹⁹ See Loßnitzer, *Veit Stoß*, p. 42; Müller, 'Veit Stoß in Krakau', p. 56; Skubiszewski, 'Der

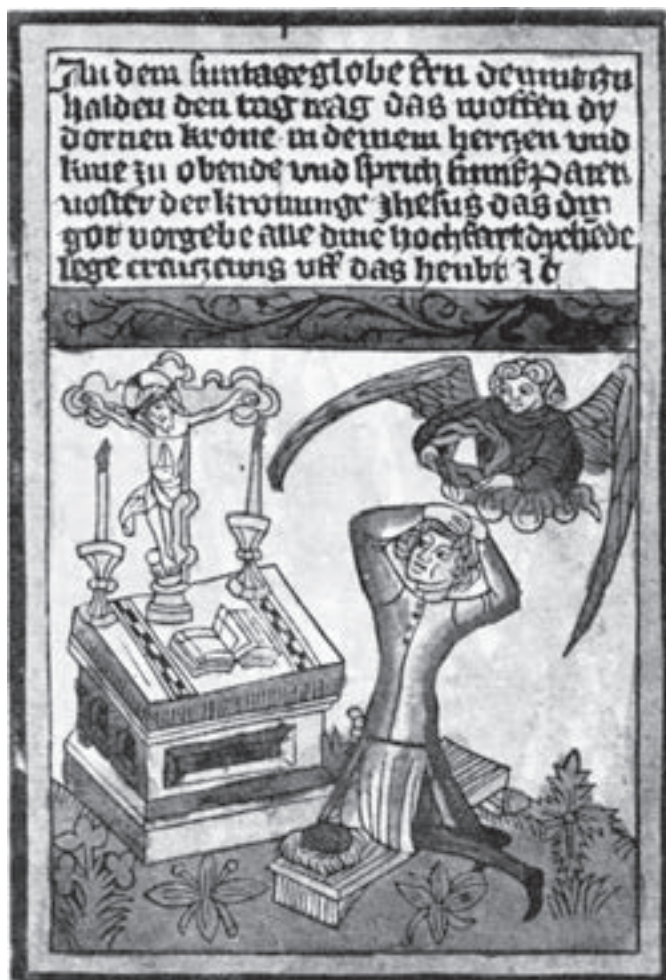


Figure 3.5.
Meditation on the
Crown of Thorns, *Septi-*
mania poenalis. Block
book, Switzerland,
c. 1455/60. Heidelberg,
University Library. From
Baxandall, *The Lime-*
wood Sculptors, p. 158.

ture is a self-referential, inward-turning gesture of mourning, while the Cracow apostle directs all his focus, almost beseechingly, on the Virgin, who is collapsing beneath him. Here it is perhaps not too far-fetched to see an association with the crown of thorns, with which the dying Mary is already crowned in this world, in order to emphasize the part she plays in the work of redemption.²⁰ In

Stil des Veit Stoß, p. 112; Schädler, 'Stetigkeit und Wandel', p. 30; Hilger, 'Zur Frage', p. 93; Kalinowski, 'Zalamane reçe', p. 63ff.

²⁰ Lentès, "Andacht" und "Gebärde", p. 59; see also Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors*, p. 158, fig. 95. The association of this gesture with a crown of thorns had already been made by



Figure 3.6. Veit Stoss, Hand with Mirror of Human Salvation. Pen and ink drawing, 1504. Location unknown (reproduced from the catalogue of antiquities by Ludwig Rosenthal, 1902). Török, 'Eine unbekannte Veit Stoss-Zeichnung', p. 64.

medieval prayer books, the gesture imitating a crown of thorns is presented as a common meditation technique, and Veit Stoss had also engaged with the idea of the hand as a mnemonic device in one of his few surviving drawings (Figs 3.6, 3.7).²¹ The transition from immanence to transcendence could hardly be more obviously underscored than by the apostle with inflated cheeks standing above on the left, though in the course of time its censer has gone missing.²² Clearly smaller in scale and therefore at some remove, Christ rises through the centre of the retable with Mary — represented as his bride, on an equal scale — up into the heavens of the Cracow Basilica's ceiling.²³ Finally, in the superstructure decoration, God the Father and God the Son crown Mary as the Queen of Heaven. Here it cannot be emphasized strongly enough that she is represented not already crowned on her throne, but rather in the process of the coronation.²⁴ Here, as in the shrine below, Mary kneels, thereby closing a circle in terms of both composition and content. Whether in death or in majesty, Mary accepts her fate with humility. While the elements we have discussed so far largely correspond to the original state of the altarpiece in the fifteenth century, the coronation must be imagined in the context of a substantially wider and taller superstructure, similar to the one from Master Paul's retable in the Church of St James in Levoca. Furthermore, the shrine cabinet was originally fully enclosed by a moulding.²⁵

Frey, *Krakau*, p. 22, and has been cited repeatedly since then: see Funk, *Veit Stoß*, p. 110, and Stuhr, *Der Krakauer Marienaltar*, p. 167.

²¹ See Török, 'Eine unbekannte Veit Stoss-Zeichnung'. For the mnemonic function of the hand, and the hand as a mirror of salvation, see Brückner, 'Hand und Heil'; Brückner, 'Bild-katechese und Seelentraining'; and Heinrichs-Schreiber, 'Veit Stoss and the Question of Style'.

²² See Szydlowski, 'Über die Restaurierung', p. 264; Szydlowski, 'O Wita Stwosza Ołtarzu Marjackim', p. 43ff. For censers in representations of the Death of the Virgin, see Schiller, *Die Ikonographie der christlichen Kunst*, IV.2, pp. 132 and 134; for the interlinkage of death and assumption in Cracow, see also Marcinkowski, 'Współodkupienie' i 'Zaślubiny', p. 35ff.

²³ For the 'transport' of the Assumption group in the double sense of the word, see Skubiszewski, 'Der Stil des Veit Stoß', p. 106; see also Trebesch, *Studien zur Dunkelgestaltung*, p. 229.

²⁴ For this point, see also the Coronation of the Virgin by Michael Pacher at the centre of the high altar retable of St Wolfgang, which was described quite lucidly by Martin Warnke in his *Geschichte der deutschen Kunst*, p. 200.

²⁵ For comparisons with Master Paul, who is believed to have been a student of Veit Stoss, see Skubiszewski, 'Der Stil des Veit Stoß', p. 99, n. 9, and Kahsnitz, *Die großen Schnitzaltäre*, p. 135. For the original appearance of the retable and the surrounding space, see Dümpelmann, *Veit Stoß und das Krakauer Marienretabel*, pp. 50–60.



Figure 3.7. Veit Stoss, High Altar Retable of the Cracow Basilica of St Mary, detail of the left interior wing: Annunciation. Czyżewski, Krzysztof, *Veit Stoss Marienaltar* (Cracow, 2007), pp. 38, 51. Photo by Adam Bujak.

This imposing, dramatized narrative unfolding along the vertical axis of the retable is flanked by the two inner wings. The left-hand wing, with the Annunciation, Birth, and the Adoration of the Magi, may be understood as thematizing embodiment; whereas the right-hand wing, with the Resurrection from the sealed tomb, the Ascension, and the descent of the Holy Spirit, takes as its theme the transcendent aspect of Christ, which remains present within the church community in the form of the Word. The theme of embodiment and disembodiment is reflected in a particularly striking way in the scenes of the Annunciation and the Assumption of Christ (Figs 3.8, 3.9). In the Annunciation scene, Mary sits before a painted background on a carved bench



Figure 3.8a. Veit Stoss, High Altar Retable of the Cracow Basilica of St Mary, detail of the right interior wing: The Assumption of Christ. Czyżewski, Krzysztof, *Veit Stoss Marienaltar* (Cracow, 2007), pp. 38, 51. Photo by Adam Bujak.



Figure 3.8b. Veit Stoss, High Altar Retable of the Cracow Basilica of St Mary, detail of the right interior wing: bulging crest of the tracery above the Assumption of Christ. Photo by Britta Dümpelmann.

while a carved bust of God the Father comes through the painted tracery window. This is clearly related to the widespread medieval association of light with its ability to penetrate glass without breaking it: 'Just as a ray of sunlight penetrates the glass and doesn't break it, so does the body of the Virgin remain untouched by the birth of its venerable fruit.'²⁶ The incarnation of the *logos* as plastic figuration is summed up symbolically in Mary's lectern, which is the element that appears at the forefront of the composition.²⁷ There is no dove, no Christ Child, no banner of text, no stalk of lilies to distract the viewer's concentration from the most essential thing.

While the incarnation of the Word here is depicted by means of sculpture emerging into space, the representation of the Assumption on the right interior panel contains a medial reflection on the theme of disembodiment. At the Mount of Olives, not only has Christ left behind his footprints as a trace of the assumption he has just undergone, but the crest of the tracery also bulges outward at that exact place — and only there — as if it had wanted to make way for the body of Christ as it rose up to heaven.²⁸ Christ's Assumption, therefore, is portrayed as having happened not only here, in this place, but also in the present — or even better, having *just* happened right now in St Mary's Basilica in Cracow. If the painted tracery window through which the carved bust of God appears creates a visual echo of the actual soaring window of the Basilica behind it, this suggests that the representations invite the viewer to read them not only within the retable itself, but also in their extension into the space of the Basilica as such. Indeed, the visual display of the Cracow retable is expanded and continued throughout the space of the church, so that it becomes something like an all-encompassing experience. The glowing, brightly coloured painting of the choir in blue, red, and gold dates to the 19th century, and is based on designs by the history painter Jan Matejko (Fig. 3.10).²⁹ At the time the altarpiece was originally created, the masonry had been painted in a much more subdued

²⁶ *Rozmyślanie Przemyśskie*, ed. by Keller and Twardzik, I, 127.

²⁷ For the connection between the lectern and the theme of incarnation, see Elmenhorst, "Und das Wort ward Fleisch"; Kelber, 'Die Fleischwerdung des Wortes'; for the significance of Mary's reading in the moment of the Annunciation, see, for instance, Wenzel, 'Die Schrift und das Heilige', p. 35.

²⁸ For Christ's footprints on the Mount of Olives, see Worm, 'Steine und Fußspuren'; for the bulging tracery crest, see Dümpelmann, *Veit Stoß und das Krakauer Marienretabel*, p. 126.

²⁹ See Lameński, 'Restauracja Kościoła Mariackiego'; Sudacka, *Kościół p. w. Najświętszej Marii*, I, 276–301; Sudacka, 'Prezbiterium kościoła Mariackiego'; and Buyko, 'Dzieje i program dekoracji'.

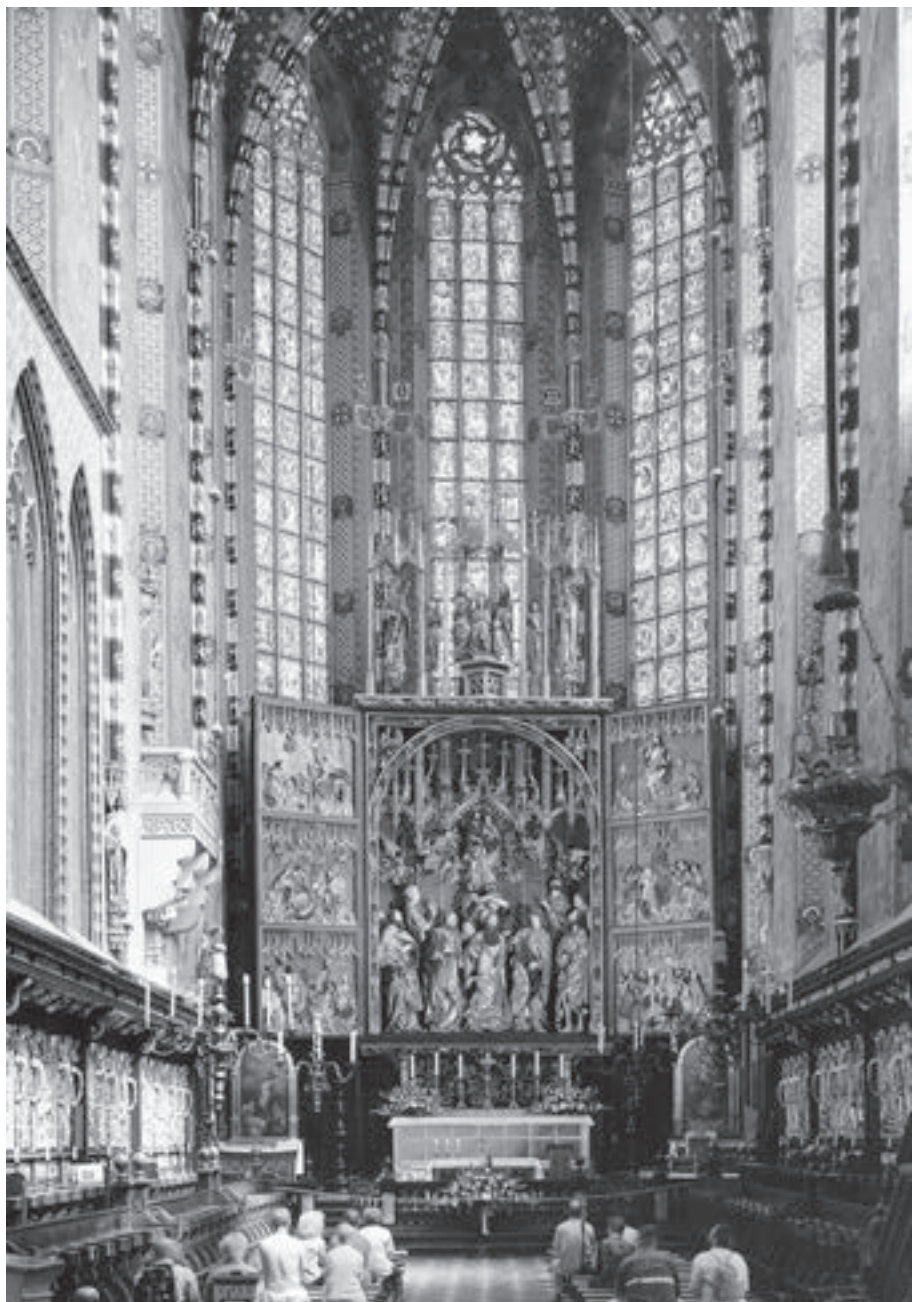


Figure 3.9. Cracow, Basilica of St Mary, view of the choir (1340–60) with the opened High Altar Retable by Veit Stoss. From Horzela and Biedronska-Slota, *Wokół Wita Stwosza*, p. 54.

manner. We can assume that only the vaulted ceiling, the ribs, and the responds would have been given a subtle polychrome treatment.³⁰ The glowing, colourful glass windows would therefore have created a significantly stronger sense of visual unity with the polychrome retable. Veit Stoss had integrated this so seamlessly into the existing spatial configuration that one might easily believe all the dominant lines and vectors of the space had been developed by him and not — as was actually the case — that he had taken them over into his work.

When the retable is open, the external frame of the shrine cabinet is nearly congruent with the masonry and cordons of the window, forming a large central space with the architecture that lies behind it. The wings to the right and left link up with the choir windows soaring upward behind them and create narrow spaces on the sides, which have the effect of prolonging the wings visually. When closed, the oddly floating exterior spans the back end of the long stretch of the choir like an oversized panel painting. The moulding, which originally ran along both wings, was at the same height as the lower casing of the choir windows — a line that was probably originally given further emphasis by a surrounding moulding.³¹

Even today, the window casings, the moulding over the triforium (which runs along the same height), and the supporting beams of the crucifix in the triumphal arch all emphasize this horizontal partition of the space. In this way, the instances of transition from immanence to transcendence which I have described could be realized throughout the entire interior space of the Cracow Basilica. It is as if the carved images were seeking to overcome the materiality of the opaque lower zone and striving toward the translucency of the upper, light-flooded zone of the choir. This is one of the key reasons why the three relief fields on each of the four panels are intended to be read not horizontally from left to right but rather vertically. With the meeting of Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate, and the Birth and Presentation of Mary at the temple, the left wing forms an extended Mariology, which circles thematically around the

³⁰ DümpeImann, *Veit Stoss und das Krakauer Marienretabel*, pp. 58–60.

³¹ This may be compared with the oil painting by Aleksander Gryglewski from the 1860s in the Poznań National Museum; Kęder, Komorowski, and Zeńczak, *Ikonaografia kościoła Mariackiego*, p. 148, fig. 83. It shows the choir space still in its Baroque condition. The cornice that is extended from the upper frame of the retable directly toward the masonry is clearly visible here. The tiered cornice that breaks forward over the pilasters (which were erected in the 18th century) was a Baroque addition that was removed in the 19th century. Underneath, however, were found the remains of two Gothic-era moldings that also ran all the way around; see Lameński, 'Restauracja Kościoła Mariackiego', p. 183, and Sudacka, 'Prezbiterium kościoła Mariackiego', p. 20.

pre-existence of the *logos*. This is particularly well staged here in the form of the small Christ child, who appears to Mary, in accordance with a contemporary Polish textual source, on an altar slab, beneath which the souls of the departed are already hoping for salvation.³² Without depicting the Annunciation or the Birth of Christ, the narrative jumps to Christ's Presentation at the Temple, where blank tablets of law and an open blank Testament, together with the Christ Child as the recently incarnated *logos*, form an obvious three-note chord. There is then nothing further about the childhood of Christ, but rather another jump in the narrative to the twelve-year-old Christ in the Temple, teaching the Word of God to the incredulous elders. The earthly works of the Word Incarnate then end equally abruptly after this scene with the Arrest, as the necessary turning point of the events. On the wing directly beside this extremely condensed narrative are the Crucifixion, the Deposition, and the Entombment of Christ, portrayed all in a row, with a contrastingly stretched sense of time; thus the major theme of this wing may be understood as the suffering body of Christ as man. The wing directly to the right shows how elevated the transcendent body of Christ is in comparison: here the body of Christ presented to the beholder is practically unscathed, markedly elongated, and luminously bright.³³ The way the narrative moves compositionally up and down the vertical corresponds most closely to the moments of transition from immanence to transcendence. The images carved by Veit Stoss seem to descend from the lit upper zone of the church space and temporarily become embodied in the lower zone, only to strive back upward again.

Veit Stoss has directed this immersive all-over display, composed of immovable carved images, as a happening that seems to realize itself within the beholder's present time, involving him as a witness to the salvific history unfolding around him. After all that has been said about the tradition of the sculpted retable and its prolific yet problematic role as a medium of revelation, this raises the question of whether and how it was possible to stage salvific history in such a bold manner, where heavenly and earthly time and space seem to be inseparably intertwined.

³² See Smoleń, 'Rozmyślanie Przemyskie' and *Oltarz mariacki Wita Stosza*, pp. 263–75.

³³ Adam Labuda speaks of a light, smooth, glowing outer skin; see Labuda, 'Zum Problem von Körper und Bewegung', p. 22. See also the following passage from the Pauline epistles: 'it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body' (Paul, 1 Cor. 15. 44), quoted in Skubiszewski, 'Der Osterzyklus', p. 137; Labuda, 'Zum Problem von Körper und Bewegung', p. 20; and Stühr, *Der Krakauer Marienaltar*, p. 108.

Disturbance

The subtlety and refinement of the inner reliefs discussed above, with the Annunciation and the Assumption (Figs 3.8 and 3.9), suggest that this imposing display does not function exclusively at the level of an overall, immersive pictorial experience suspending the threshold of heavenly and earthly time. Indeed, particularly upon close viewing, it simultaneously calls on the viewer to assume a distant attitude of media-conscious reflection, remaining bound in his own present time. This introduces a marked disturbance into the seemingly smooth functioning of the display, as if there were a sort of distortion in its reception, causing its apparent perfection to disintegrate.³⁴ If the representations on the reliefs aim at an actualization of the depicted events within the real space of the church, then on the one hand they make the process of embodiment and disembodiment palpable in the here and now of the Cracow Basilica; on the other hand, they also refer to themselves and their status as medial artefacts by materializing and making visible the dematerialization inherent in carved images. And it is exactly here that the gap between heavenly and earthly time is not completely bridged, but maintained: instead of synaesthetically involving the viewer in the image narrative, making him part of the salvific history displayed, these subtle medial reflections reject the beholder, throwing him back upon his own present time.

Inevitably, one thinks in this context of Daniel Arasse's characterization of the function of sacred art in the fifteenth century: 'The signifier must be to a certain degree credible — or better: convincing — so that one could believe all the more in the signified.'³⁵ The plausibility of the signifier — that is, the sculpture as the vehicle of the image — and with it, the presence of the sacred, are heightened to the extreme in Cracow. At the same time, the carved image contains very subtle reflections on the relationship between presence and representation, so that conscious reference is always made to the signifier.

This characteristic mediality becomes particularly intense in the apostle figures of the central shrine. A more careful look at these giants reveals that the impressive (in the truest sense of the word) corporeality of their deeply carved wrinkles, their veristic epidermis, and their gestures and expressions stands in

³⁴ Ludwig Jäger describes the condition of a faultless use of a medium as a lack of disturbance, which he contrasts with the condition of interruption. Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation*, describe the undisturbed condition as a 'looking through' [the medium] and the interruption as a 'looking at'; see Jaeger, 'Störung und Transparenz', p. 60.

³⁵ Arasse, 'Entre dévotion et culture', pp. 136ff.

stark contrast not only to their seemingly empty garments, but above all to their fragmented bodies. For the apostles in the second row, heads and busts break off quite suddenly, and there are gaping holes where one would expect to find their lower bodies, so that the beholder's gaze falls onto the monochrome blue of the shrine's back wall. As Theodor Müller had already noted in 1933: 'This is not an oversight on the part of the workshop, but rather the result of a different valuation of the optical in the Middle Ages.'³⁶

And in 1980, Michael Baxandall described the Gothic expressive style as follows:

The relief style owes something to Netherlandish painting, particularly to the diffused van der Weyden-ish manner widely current in Germany, but its singularity is determined mainly by the image's duty to be clear, even, as here, under difficult conditions. The oddly foreshortened forms and contorted figures that are disconcerting or grotesque in close-up are not normally seen in this unsoftened form: from the choir of the church they appear no more than clear and lively, and detail photographs in particular are liable to give a spurious quaint impression by denying both the proper distance of view and the competing physical context of the large and brightly-hued church.³⁷

With their fragmented bodies on the one hand, and their sheer expressiveness on the other, the colossal apostles of the Cracow retable truly are rather quaint beings. They oscillate between corporeal heft and emptiness, between an exaggerated realism and an abstracting fragmentation. What they are in reality, and what they appear to be to the beholder, is therefore largely dependent on one's viewpoint. The expressiveness of the sculptures, which is almost frightening up close, is greatly moderated when seen from the nave. Indeed, from there, it seems almost as if the carved image, which is at the back end of the extremely long corridor of the choir, is meant to come toward the viewer. But the closer one gets to the apostles, the more exaggerated and distorted is the effect of their expressive actions, and the more obvious are the gaping holes below their upper bodies. Again, the viewer is not wholly involved *in* the salvific history, sharing the time and space staged by the sculptural actors, but finds himself confronted *with* the mediality of sculpture itself. This is revealed as artificial

³⁶ Müller, 'Veit Stoß in Krakau', p. 32.

³⁷ Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors*, p. 269. We can see how important a certain minimal size is — to prevent an altarpiece from being swallowed up at the end of the high and long choir — if we look at the Lady of Sorrows retable from the Chapel of the Holy Cross at Wawel, which was put in the Basilica of St Mary during World War II as a place holder for the Stoss retable; see image in Dietl, 'Himmelfahrt der Maria', p. 103.

representation, and the viewer is thrown back upon his own present time and space. The disciplining of the gaze, which had once been effected by means of the strictly stereotypical arrangement of the figures, the rigid hierarchy, and the unifying golden membrane of the retable sculpture, is here secured through the fragmentation of the sculptural body. In this way, the representation allows for a powerfully dramatized staging, which does appear to function perfectly when viewed from a distance, but upon closer examination consciously displays its staged qualities, its materiality, and its symbolic nature. Thus the immersive experience begins to disintegrate.

The exterior 'pictorial wall' (*Bilderwand*) that spans the enclosure of the space at the back of the church when the altarpiece is shut is also unusual in many respects.³⁸ For one thing, there is its placement at the far end of the long stretch of the choir, together with the immobilization of the exterior set of wings: unlike most other retables, the Cracow altarpiece eschews a moveable external pair of wings; instead, the external wings are permanently attached to the walls of the choir.³⁹ This not only underscores the heightened integration of the altarpiece into the space, which we have already discussed, but also reinforces the impression that the exterior is a self-contained whole. If we consider, furthermore, that carved retables usually follow the principle of heightening the effects as one moves toward the centre, with the level of three-dimensionality gradually increasing from least on the outside to greatest on the inside, the immediate use of reliefs on the exterior is extremely disconcerting. All the other extant carved altarpieces start off with painted panels on the exterior, and then proceed from low to high relief, and eventually to full sculpture in the shrine.⁴⁰

³⁸ For the commonly used concept of the 'pictorial wall', see Loßnitzer, *Veit Stoß*, p. 42; Müller, 'Veit Stoß in Krakau', p. 40; Paatz, *Süddeutsche Schnitzaltäre*, p. 76; Liebmann, *Die deutsche Plastik*, pp. 51 and 234; Marcinkowski, 'Uwagi o typie', pp. 32ff. and 36; Stuhr, *Der Krakauer Marienaltar*, p. 38; Łodyńska-Kosińska, *Stwos: Lata krakowskie*, p. 46f.

³⁹ See Skubiszewski, 'Der Stil des Veit Stoß', p. 100, especially n. 13 (with examples of altarpieces executed purely in painting), and Marcinkowski, 'Uwagi o typie', pp. 19–20. The immobilized wings were in part seen as a structural necessity; see, for instance, Dietl, 'Himmelfahrt der Maria', p. 86.

⁴⁰ The so-called Bamberg Retable by Veit Stoss is one of the few extant retables that also eschews panel painting altogether; see Skubiszewski, 'Der Stil des Veit Stoß', p. 100; Marcinkowski, 'Uwagi o typie', p. 17; Łodyńska-Kosińska, "Ingenium et labor", p. 147; Łodyńska-Kosińska, *Stwos: Lata krakowskie*, p. 47; Kahsnitz, *Die großen Schnitzaltäre*, p. 15. Although repeated attempts have been made — beginning with Walter Paatz — to see a precursor and prototype for such a purely sculptural solution in the lost Constance Retable of Nicolaus Gerhaert van Leyden, today there is agreement that such conjecture is futile, due to the impossibil-

Veit Stoss already makes use of low relief on the exterior, and thus seems to deprive himself of painting as the ground level of three-dimensionality. And yet in terms of effect, he uses relief as if it were painting, as has frequently been noted in the literature:

Stoss approached the composition of the relief as if he were a painter. Even when he represented a large number of figures, as for instance in the scene with the Descent of the Holy Spirit, he disposed them in a specific interior, which was executed down to the smallest detail, or in a landscape (as in the scene of the Assumption of Christ). Each representation demands to be seen as a painting and makes its appeal to a great extent through colour, which substantially contributes to the unity of the compositions, which vary in their design and even quality.⁴¹

When the altar is closed, there are twelve reliefs visible, carved in low relief on panels some five to six centimetres thick, which create the impression of being modelled paintings, and seem like a sort of heightening of the painted exterior panels preferred in the late Gothic period and an intensification of their plasticity.⁴²

Here too, it makes a significant difference whether the exterior wall of images is viewed from afar or from close up. From the nave, one can hardly distinguish whether the piece is actually made up of carved or painted images. The closer one comes to the relief, the more distinctly do the carved portions of it emerge, and the more sharply does the subtle interplay between sculpture and painting come into focus. What Eberhard Lutze calls an intensification of plasticity is in essence the engendering of conspicuous mediality, which prompts reflection on the status of the carved image. Sculpture appears in an unusual pictorial location, where it behaves like painting. Hence, the revealing of the sculptural medium as representation turns out to be a key-note being played in multiple forms of artistic expression, all of them making the viewer aware of his own spatial and temporal specificity. This play with the medial possibilities of the carved retable is further continued in the reliefs on the interior wings, which have double the power of the carved wall of images on the exterior. In this way, Veit Stoss achieves a subtle, gradual intensification of the artistic means of representation, which basically corresponds to the traditional principle of intensification governing winged retables — but is completely novel in that it

ity of reconstructing the evidence. See Paatz, *Süddeutsche Schnitzaltäre*, p. 73; Skubiszewski, 'Der Stil des Veit Stoß', p. 100, n. 12; Marcinkowski, 'Uwagi o typie', p. 17ff.. See also Kahsnitz, *Die großen Schnitzaltäre*, p. 28.

⁴¹ Liebmann, *Die deutsche Plastik*, p. 234.

⁴² Lutze, *Veit Stoss*, p. 17.

manages to do all this by sculptural means alone. One might think that the full-round, monumental sculpture in the central shrine would form the pinnacle of this principle of intensification; however, since only the apostles in the first row are elaborated completely in three dimensions, and the lower bodies of the apostles in the second row are left out, the shrine itself actually has the effect of a rather flat expanse. This impression is further reinforced by the backing, which is painted in a monochrome blue and looks like a flat plane when viewed frontally at some distance. In reality, it contains three niches, which allow for a more varied arrangement of the apostles between foreground and background, and may be read, not least, as a reference to the conventional architecture of a chapel shrine. Thus Veit Stoss allows the principle of intensification toward the centre to oscillate, with some tension between affirmation and negation.⁴³

Such a finely balanced pictorial regime, which plays with various effects from both far away and close up, practically begs the question of the existence of a rood screen. However, there is no evidence of this either in the sources or in architectural history; quite the contrary. A rood screen would have been entirely appropriate to the architectural scheme of the long choir taken over from the Mendicant friars, and the connection between the altar of the Holy Cross, the rood screen, and the triumphal cross was so widespread that a rood screen below the cross in the triumphal arch would have been quite expected.⁴⁴ But although the existence of an Altar of the Holy Cross is documented in St Mary's Basilica since 1439, this was placed not directly under the triumphal arch but to the right of it.⁴⁵ The surviving record of the foundational charter, the

⁴³ See also Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors*, p. 19: 'The relief style is showy, playing games with painted flat surfaces behind the figures and with both illusion and denial of illusion of depth.'

⁴⁴ For the generally close connection between the rood screen, the altar of the Holy Cross, and the triumphal cross, and their construction *in medio ecclesiae*, see Beer, *Triumphkreuze des Mittelalters*, pp. 282ff. In reference to the architectural scheme of the long choir typical of Cracow, the question of how obligatory the rood screen would have been for this group is very uncertain, even though the stretched-out, narrow choir had become established as characteristic of Cracow's city basilicas (whether these belonged to parishes or monastic orders). Although functionally speaking the rood screen was closely connected with the long choir, and the Dominicans had prescribed it in 1249, in Cracow it is only in the Dominican church that a rood screen can actually be documented since the mid-thirteenth century; see Grzybowski, 'Das Problem der Langchöre', p. 163, and Węclawowicz, *Gotyckie Bazyliki*, p. 52, n. 124. Aside from the rather bold conjectures about a rood screen in the Corpus Christi Church in Kazimierz, there are no convincing indications in any other basilica in Cracow; see Węclawowicz, *Gotyckie Bazyliki*, p. 52, n. 124.

⁴⁵ See Piwowarczyk, *Dzieje kościoła Mariackiego*, pp. 143, 159, and fig. 5.

political context, and other contemporary sources show that St Mary's Basilica of Cracow was a site of self-actualization for the Cracow middle classes. Due to its prominent position on the central marketplace, along the Royal Route from the main gate in the north to the cathedral in the south, the choir of the Basilica in particular played an important part in royal and episcopal ceremony.⁴⁶ The use of the pews in the nave, however, indicates that this area was meant for the various groups of the middle classes, and it was thus a 'place representative of the city and intended for the ceremonies consistent with that'.⁴⁷

If any separation of various user groups can be assumed at all, then only a loose one that was not strictly enforced spatially, with the nave primarily used by the people, and the choir by the king and the bishop. With regard to the opportunities for aesthetic reception within the space of the church, then, it can be assumed that the viewer was entirely free to transition between the distant view and the close-up view, thereby regulating the extent to which he wanted to alternate between an immersive pictorial experience and a reflective contemplation of image and artwork.

Veit Stoss had thus set the scene for a subtle display within the choir space of the Cracow Basilica, which is increasingly disrupted the closer one approaches it. What is quite remarkable about this is that Stoss does not fully guide the reception of the beholder, but instead allows him to choose for himself. In this way the viewer can actively decide to what extent he wants to engage in the process of 'looking through' or 'looking at' the medium.⁴⁸ He thus becomes a sort of wanderer between heavenly and earthly time, and can almost cross the threshold to heavenly time as it is presented in the display — but only *almost*. The closer he seeks to come to it, the more it ultimately pulls away from him and remains what it is: an almost perfect illusion, which consciously displays its imperfections, but with such extreme artistic skill and such a stupendous grasp of the presentness and the symbolic nature of the image, that it could hardly be more perfect.

⁴⁶ See Walczak and Czyżewski, 'Die Krakauer Kathedrale und die Marienkirche', p. 114. A particularly significant example of the use of the choir is the exhibition of royal insignia in 1412: after King Władysław Jagiełło brought the crown of Bolesław the Brave from Hungary, it was placed on display in the choir of St Mary's Basilica, and not in the royal cathedral; see Walczak and Czyżewski, 'Die Krakauer Kathedrale und die Marienkirche', p. 112.

⁴⁷ See Madej-Anderson, 'Leib, Bild, Raum', p. 293. For the pews in St Mary's Basilica, see the extensive discussion in Daszyńska, 'Stalle kościoła N. P. Marii'; see also Walczak and Czyżewski, 'Die Krakauer Kathedrale und die Marienkirche', p. 114.

⁴⁸ Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation*; see also Jaeger, 'Störung und Transparenz', p. 60.

Pictorial Knowledge and Temporality around 1500 in Cracow

It was decisive for the mediality of Veit Stoss's high altar retable that the relationship between signified and signifier, form and matter, presence and representation had begun to shift at various levels — theology and devotion, art and philosophy — and Stoss was able to witness these processes in Cracow as they happened. It is here, when the former unity of signified and signifier is abandoned, that the moment of (self-)reflection emerges, and the viewer gains a more distant, in some respects confident relationship with signs and their meanings. This enables him to read signs more in their representational quality and to take their presence less for granted; it therefore involves a new awareness of temporality and of how its manifold levels may interact with each other. Of course these circumstances were in no way exclusive to Cracow around 1500 but should rather be seen as a pan-European phenomenon. For instance, Thomas Lentes has observed, with regard to the doctrine of Holy Communion, and the theory and contemplation of images from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, how the value of signs and media generally began to be negotiated in new ways, with the site of memory gradually moving from object (or images) to beholder. The achievement of the artist, as well as the power of seeing, could therefore become the object of the discussions that were being held around the essence and value of images.⁴⁹ I will conclude by discussing what consequences this had for the way the carved altarpiece handled the issue of temporality. First, however, I would like to address some aspects specific to the situation of Veit Stoss in Cracow.

Aside from the fact that the artist gave up his Nuremberg citizenship in 1477, no information survives about Stoss's development prior to his work on the Cracow high altar retable: this large commission for the most important parish church of the East-Central European metropolis is the first work that can be securely attributed to him.⁵⁰ Cracow was a large, economically and culturally flourishing city, and it is well known that the ground Stoss found there could hardly have been more fertile for both the conception of the retable for St Mary's Basilica and for his own artistic development. However, the significance of this really cannot be emphasized enough.⁵¹ Cracow was on the artistic periphery, and as a newcomer to it, Stoss had received an important commission.

⁴⁹ Lentes, 'Auf der Suche', pp. 21ff.

⁵⁰ Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors*, p. 266.

⁵¹ See Skubiszewski, 'Polnische mittelalterliche Kunst', particularly p. 55, and Labuda, 'Die künstlerischen Beziehungen'.

In executing this commission, he enjoyed substantial creative freedom, far from the powerful influence of personalities such as Nicolaus Gerhaerdts or Rogier van der Weyden.⁵² Although Cracow's cultural and economic growth went hand in hand with an emerging maturity of artistic understanding, the local artists tended to rely on the existing developments of Netherlandish and Rhenish artistic vocabulary rather than pursuing their own impulses — an environment in which Stoss could quickly become the 'big fish in a small artistic pond'.⁵³ While the commissioning body for the retable was headed by a three-man committee (made up of two members of the city council and the town clerk), which acted in an advisory capacity, Stoss also profited immensely from the rich intellectual atmosphere in Cracow. He associated with the humanist circle of the city, had contact with intellectuals at the royal court, such as Philippo Buonaccorsi (called Kallimachus) and, not least, with philosophers such as John of Glogów — one of the main players in the discussion about form and matter that was going on at the time at Cracow University.⁵⁴

The early presence of the *Devotio moderna* that had come to Cracow from Bohemia had contributed to a fairly gentle church reform, which may have somewhat countered the more aggressive tones coming from the reformers, particularly as the seeds of reformation in Poland generally fell on rocky rather than fertile soil.⁵⁵ Textual sources popular at the time in Bohemia and Poland,

⁵² For artistic freedom on the periphery, see Claussen, 'Zentrum, Peripherie, Transperipherie.'

⁵³ Baxandall, 'Veit Stoß, ein Bildhauer in Nürnberg,' p. 9.

⁵⁴ For the conditions of the retable's production in Cracow and for Veit Stoss's intellectual network there, see especially Dietl, 'Himmelfahrt der Maria', and Dümpelmann, *Veit Stoß und das Krakauer Marienretabel*, pp. 81–103. It remains uncertain whether this Johannes Schelling of Glogau is identical with the 'preacher of the Germans' emphasized at the end of the commission charter as 'praedicator Almanorum vir clarissimi ingenii Joannes Galer de Glogovia maiori, artium magister, excellentissimus preadicator verbi Dei, qui suis monitionibus multum ad hoc opus fecit' (a man of especially superb inventiveness, John of Glogów, Master of the Faculty of Arts, excellent preacher of the word of God, who has done much good for this work through his persuasion); Latin citation, *Cracovia artificum*, ed. by Ptaśnik, p. 308f, no. 1028; English translation from German version in Dümpelmann, *Veit Stoß und das Krakauer Marienretabel*, pp. 89ff. What is certain, however, is that in 1495 the philosopher owed the artist a debt of 80 guilders, of which there are numerous subsequent reminders, and which was not repaid in full until 1502 — although the sources do not specify what the debt was for. See Gottschalk, 'Der fördernde Anteil,' p. 218; Dębicki, 'Wit Stwos z Jan z Glogowa,' p. 113. Also see the respective sources in *Cracovia artificum*, ed. by Ptaśnik, p. 365, no. 1195; p. 367, no. 1205, and p. 368, no. 1208.

⁵⁵ See Schmidt, *Auf Felsen gesät*; for 'reform' and 'reformation', see also Machilek, 'Beweggründe, Inhalte und Probleme', pp. 6–14.

such as the so-called Malogranatum, demonstrate how, from the beginning of the fifteenth century, the encounter of the faithful with God was increasingly understood as a private betrothal with Christ, located within the individual as *templum dei*.⁵⁶ The consequence this had for the image was that while it could prepare and inspire the encounter with God, it could no longer be the site of this encounter itself. The ideas present within the context of the *Devotio moderna* coincided with the theological and philosophical discussions in Cracow regarding embodiment and materiality, which corresponded to the new awareness of the value of the sign and its meanings. The specifics of these Cracow discussions can be traced in the numerous fifteenth-century commentaries on Aristotle's *De anima*, in biblical commentaries, and in the commentaries on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard.⁵⁷ The writers wondered whether the spirit was above the flesh, speculated on whether Adam's soul was created together with his body, when the soul and body were bound together, whether the soul itself possessed a material nature, and whether it could carry on an independent existence after death. Bound up with this was a growing awareness of the form of human existence and its components — matter and form, body and soul — which relate differently to one another depending on the interpretation.⁵⁸ These shifting conceptions of sign and signified can readily be reconstructed in the discussion over form and matter, and can be traced to the immediate milieu of Veit Stoss through the figure of John of Głogów, who made his position in the form and matter debate particularly clear in his commentaries on Aristotle's *De anima*.⁵⁹ Even though we cannot with certainty reconstruct a particular course of influence in one direction or the other, we can nonetheless gain a clear picture of the intellectual setting in which the mediality of the Cracow high altar retable came into being, and its general parallels to the existing discourses. The artistic position attained by Stoss under these conditions is shaped by self-awareness, in the truest sense of the word, and uses the carved image to formulate extremely subtle reflections on the possibilities and limits of its own means of expression. Aside from the history of devotional, theological, and philosophical discourses, this position is also embedded in a temporally and geographically specific artistic discourse; the Cracow high altar retable is

⁵⁶ See Gerwing, 'Malogranatum,' and Gerwing, 'Die böhmische Reformbewegung.'

⁵⁷ See Bochenek, *Filozofia człowieka*.

⁵⁸ Bochenek, *Filozofia człowieka*, pp. 260–72 and 524ff.

⁵⁹ See Kuksewicz, 'Le prolongement des polémiques.'

considered to be one of the most ambitious projects of an era of growing artistic consciousness in the East European metropolis:

Art begins to gain significance as a visual medium; the commissioning of an art work, while it remains a religious message, now becomes to a greater degree the political manifestation of the commissioner, who thus presents himself in his dignity and his social position. More Art! This fact, or rather this postulate, which forms the basis of the development of European art in the late Middle Ages, has a concrete historical background in the kingdom of Poland: the growing international significance of the Jagiellonian dynasty, the changes to the state constitution, the growing demands of the competing classes, as well as the influence of Humanism.⁶⁰

The most important point of reference, however, was the Netherlandish- and Rhenish-influenced formal vocabulary that set the tone for both the middle class and the court milieu:

The art of the Netherlands provides the measure of artistic achievement for this work.⁶¹ At stake is the creation of a convincingly realistic depiction of the external world and its elements, which have a strong but at the same time discretely suggested religious and symbolic connotation.⁶²

When we consider that in his Madrid Deposition Rogier van der Weyden elicited the illusion of a three-dimensional, carved shrine in a two-dimensional painting (Fig. 3.5), we have to wonder: to what extent did Veit Stoss — with the apparent flatness of an actual three-dimensional shrine and the painterly effect of an exterior sculpted in relief — consciously want to formulate a sculptural counterposition to one of the masterpieces of a *maximus pictor* of the fifteenth century?⁶³ This would in any case have been very compatible with the tastes of the Cracow public, who were quite obsessed with Netherlandism, and scholars have repeatedly found common ground between the Netherlandish painter and the south German sculptor on the basis of stylistic parallels.⁶⁴ Although

⁶⁰ Labuda, 'Die künstlerischen Beziehungen', pp. 10ff.

⁶¹ Author's note: the work here is the Lady of Sorrows retable from Wawel Castle.

⁶² Labuda, 'Die künstlerischen Beziehungen', p. 8; see also Fajt, 'War Veit Stoss der Erste', pp. 289ff.

⁶³ Cusanus described Rogier van der Weyden as a *maximus pictor*: see Belting and Kruse, *Die Erfindung des Gemäldes*, p. 18, and Suckale, *Die Johannestafel*, p. 69.

⁶⁴ See Skubiszewski, 'Der Stil des Veit Stoß', p. 120, and Hilger, 'Zur Frage', p. 88, with a discussion of the research questions.

it is not possible to pursue the comparison with Rogier van der Weyden in depth here, this does demonstrate how consciously both artists pondered the possibilities and limitations of their respective forms of expression, and how pointedly they presented their respective medial reflections in the painted or carved image itself.

Contrary to the remarks at the beginning of this essay about the artistic bias against the powerful presence of sculpture, the end of the fifteenth century thus reveals itself as an era in which such old biases against the sign and its meanings — not only in the arts but also in theology and philosophy — were fundamentally set aside.⁶⁵ The spell of the sculptural medium's presentness was broken, and it ceased to be a value to which the artist and beholder had to subjugate themselves, but rather became one they could discover in order to actively engage with it. In Cracow, Veit Stoss had the good luck to find himself in an environment that did not simply allow but positively demanded that he take creative advantage of these new conditions. Stoss's high altar retable for St Mary's Basilica is blown up to monumental scale, the sculpture is as dramatic as it is expressive, and he takes the effect of presentness to such a pinnacle that the Death, Assumption, and Coronation of the Virgin actually seem to play out in the here and now of the Cracow church, with heavenly and earthly time appearing as one. The decisive point, however, is that he does not simply take the presentness of the sculpture as given by the medium but rather consciously stages this presence as an artist, so that in the end what we are seeing here is represented presence. He consciously lays this staged quality bare and makes it into an object of representation, so that this subtle but essential difference becomes visible to the beholder. Thus heavenly and earthly time in the St Mary's retable are still differentiated, but the symbolic conditions under which the carved retable mediates between them have shifted. Now, the artist may emerge as the creator, the art as creation, and the viewer as a knowing and active recipient who, as the wanderer between heavenly and earthly time, is called upon to continually test and retest his powers of seeing and perception in the face of the carved artwork's oscillating mediality.

⁶⁵ See also Lentjes, 'Auf der Suche', p. 37: 'Artwork and artist are thus set free. While religious dignity may still be attached to the content of the representations, both the artist and his process of production, in contrast, are devoid of any religious valuation or revelatory, theological relevance.'

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MEDIATING THE PASSION IN TIME AND SPACE

Christian Kiening
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Salvation History and Passion

In Christian thought, the concept of salvation history is based upon a paradox. Salvation is thought of temporally, grounded in a progression and the meaning-filled order of this progression in the form of history. And it is at the same time thought supratemporally — the idea of salvation, after all, refers to a plenitude in which time would be sublated and all times would be united in a single, co-eternal totality. Time is held to be the necessary complement to the world: created, following the widespread view of the Middle Ages, at the same time as the world, time serves — in the form of history — as an intuitable form. In time, Man is capable of experiencing the God-given principles of salvation history. At the same time, however, he must learn that time — always already related to its end — can ultimately only be grasped in the mode of transcendence. However, much as time can be understood as the condition of possibility for a sensible order, time is nonetheless also inscribed with the unavailability of the final meaning of this order. Resulting from this are both optimistic and sceptical positions with respect to the knowability of temporal-historical teleology,¹ and above all attempts to bridge the gap between eternity and temporality: by understanding the eternal as something which appears in

¹ See Kablitz, 'Das Ende des *Sacrum Imperium*'.

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the temporal;² by attempting to systematize an increasingly complex history as orderly continuity;³ by demonstrating that not only mundane, but also heavenly relations are calculable;⁴ and by linking the core moments of universal salvation history with the temporality of human subjects.⁵

With this, we have named some of the tendencies present in the late Middle Ages for dealing with salvation history, eternity, and temporality. They frequently refer to the figure of Christ, who was linked early on not only to the conception of a 'middle' of time, but also to that of a mediation between eternity and temporality.⁶ Since the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, this has occurred with particular frequency with reference to the Passion.⁷ In the form of the Passion, the temporal paradox becomes, as medial paradox, capable of both negotiation and figuration. This in the sense that the relationship between the mortal and the divine is not worked out in abstract theological categories but in concrete, material forms. In each case, these forms bring with them their own unique temporalities, in which the supratemporal can appear. Late Medieval texts and images of the Passion take over at the point where the canonical texts (the Gospels, the letters, the early commentaries) had come to a halt. The former supplement the latter, filling out gaps and competing for authenticity. At the same time, they make the original events present once again, transforming them into corporeal and imaginative acts. Thus, these late medieval texts and images move within a perspective at once historical, contemporary, and forward-looking, thereby testing out complex models of temporality.

On the one hand, the interpretation of historical events takes place on the basis of increasing recourse to the Old Testament. Its prophetic statements are related to the New Testament, in which the Old is in turn found to be reflected as well: historical and ahistorical moments, primordial ones, timeless and quo-

² See Dauven-van Knippenberg, Herberichs, and Kiening, *Medialität des Heils im späten Mittelalter*.

³ See Goetz, 'Die Zeit als Ordnungsfaktor'; Melville, 'Geschichte in graphischer Gestalt'.

⁴ See Borst, 'Computus: Zeit und Zahl im Mittelalter'; Angenendt and others, 'Gezählte Frömmigkeit'.

⁵ See Maier, 'Die Subjektivierung der Zeit'.

⁶ See Cullmann, 'Christus' und die 'Zeit', passim; Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit*, passim.

⁷ See Ruh, *Bonaventura deutsch*; Baier, *Untersuchungen zu den Passionsbetrachtungen*; Marrow, *Passion Iconography*; Belting, *Das Bild und sein Publikum*, passim; Haug and Wachinger, *Die Passion Christi*; Köpf, 'Passionsfrömmigkeit'; Seegets, *Passionstheologie und Passionsfrömmigkeit*; Kemper, *Die Kreuzigung Christi*; Aurenhammer and Bohde, *Räume der Passion*.

tidian ones all dovetail into one another. On the other hand, the interpretation of historical events takes place under increasing recourse to authorities like the church fathers or figures from the history of piety, who had themselves already interpreted or appropriated the movement of history. When the Dominican Felix Fabri of Ulm visited the holy sites in Palestine toward the end of the fifteenth century, he certainly encountered the material records of the Saviour's earthly existence. At the same time, however, he bore with him the knowledge of a long tradition. In the Chapel of Thomas, where the Apostle is said to have touched the crucifixion wound, Fabri was reminded of Bernhard of Clairvaux, to whom the Crucified One leaned down from the Cross; Francis of Assisi, who received the stigmata; and Catherine of Siena, who drank from the wound in Christ's side.⁸

In this manner, the Passion receives a wealth of reflections in both older and contemporary times. At the same time, the medial figures and forms that mediate the Passion multiply. Interpretation and presentification of the events of the Passion go hand in hand, and theoretical, performative, and narrative elements complement one another. What results is an oscillation between two aspects: one places oneself into the historical series of events, and at the same time makes this series present in the here and now. Spatially and temporally, this means: meditation is based upon the meditator's present as well as the historical temporality of the Passion. And this meditation moves in a present, proximate space, which contains vistas into the distance, as well as in a historically distant space, which meditation brings closer. The two aspects can emerge in complementary manner in texts and images because in them, temporal and spatial dimensions are bound together: the difficult-to-grasp temporality of salvation history is translated into spatial dimensions (centre/border, east/west, north/south). Conversely, spatial data of the church or the cloister becomes transparent with respect to temporal aspects (the Old Covenant, the New Covenant, the time of the Church, the End Times). Supporting such relationships of exchange between time and space is the fact that the various medial forms rely upon a similar paradigm: the division of the Passion — in one instance into individual moments, in the other into individual stations.

Such a division begins to accompany the development of Passion piety relatively early on. The church year was conceived as a repetition of the life of

⁸ *Fratris Felicis Fabri Evagatorium*, ed. by Hassler, I, 95b; a Latin-French edition: *Les errances de Frère Félix*, ed. by Meyers and others. See also Meyers, 'L'*Evagatorium* de Frère Félix Fabri'.

Christ. From Friday to Sunday, the liturgy of the week led from the sufferings of Christ to his Resurrection. The way monks, clerics, and eventually pious laymen structured the course of the day also followed the paradigm of the Passion. The *Meditatio passionis Christi*, which is presumed to have arisen in the second half of the thirteenth century, was the first to rigorously divide the events of the Passion in accordance with the seven canonical hours of prayer and found a number of successors in the late Middle Ages.⁹ The various moments of the Passion thus began to seep into quotidian temporality. However, the Passion was also understood as a series of highly temporally determined events. A vernacular tract on the Passion, created around 1400 on the basis of Latin archetypes, pointedly places the events in Jerusalem into a very precise temporal frame:

Dornach an dem sontage ginc Cristus gegen Iherusalem. Do wart er in eren empfangen. Do treib er us dem tempel mit einer geisele von stricken, die do kouften und vorkouften. Do larte er den ganzen tac. Des abendis spete muste er geen us der stat, ungesen, daz in niemant wolde behalden noch herbergen obir nacht mit sinen iungeren. Und muste bie nachte gen czwu mile gen Bethania. An dem montage gar vru ginc er weder gegen Iherusalem.¹⁰

(Afterwards, on Sunday, Christ went to Jerusalem. There he was received with honour. There he drove the merchants out of the temple with a scourge made of rope, and taught the entire day. Late in the evening, he was forced to leave the city without any dinner, because no one in the city wanted to take in him and his Apostles or lodge them for the night. And he had to travel two miles at night back to Bethany. Monday morning, he went back to Jerusalem.)

The same can be said about the spatial dimension. The events of the Passion are understood as being divided into distinct spatial stations. The Chapter 35 of the *Speculum humanae salvationis*, which emerged around 1300, tells how Mary, Mother of God, visited the various sites of memory in passionate meditation following the Ascension of her Son: Nazareth, Bethlehem, Mount Tabor, Mount Sinai, and the grave. Mary appears here as the ur-form of the pilgrim, demonstrating the model that Christians are to follow:

Praedicta ergo loca debemus exemplo eius perambulare
Et passionem Christi recolendo ferventer deplorare;
Quod si nequimus ea perambulare corporaliter,
Perambulemus saltem ea devoto corde spiritualiter.¹¹

⁹ Kemper, *Die Kreuzigung Christi*, pp. 70–76.

¹⁰ Ruh, *Der Passionstraktat des Heinrich von St. Gallen*, 3.16–24; see Kiening, ‘Mitte der Zeit’.

¹¹ *Speculum humanae salvationis*, ed. by Lutz and Pedrizet, I, ll. 73–76: on the pilgrimage

(thus, following her example, we as well must visit the locations mentioned and shed tears in fervid memory of the sufferings of Christ. Should we be unable to visit them with our body, then we must at least visit them mentally, with thoughtful hearts.)

This mental pilgrimage operates for its part with a transposition of the moments of the Passion onto current spatial givens. In his *Vita*, Heinrich Seuse describes a re-enactment of the Passion which oscillates between the corporeal and the mental or spiritual:

Er vie es an mit ime an dem jungisten nahtmale und leid sich mit ime von stat zů stat, unz daz er in brachte für Pylatus. Ze jungst nam er in vor gerihte also verteilten, und gieng mit im us den ellenden krúzgang, den er tet von dem rihthus unz under den galgen. Und den krúzgang begie er also: So er kom an die swellen des capitels, do knúwet er nider und kúste die ersten fússtapfen, die er tet, do er also verteilte sich umb gekerte und in den tod wolte gan, und vieng denne an den salmen von unsers herren marter: Deus, Deus meus, respice etc. [...] Dar na stünd er geswind uf und trat sinem herren bald na, unz daz er an sinen siten kom. Und daz bild waz im etwen als gegenwúrtig, reht als ob er liplich an siner siten giengi.¹²

(He began it with the Last Supper and shared his suffering from site to site, until he brought him [Christ] before Pontius Pilate. Finally, he allowed himself to be condemned before the court as well, and went with him along the miserable Stations of the Cross, which he followed from the courthouse to the gallows. And he went the Stations of the Cross like so: when he came to the threshold of a chapter, he kneeled down and kissed the first footsteps the Lord made, when as a condemned man he turned around and wanted to go to his death; and then he began the psalm of our Lord's torment: *Deus, Deus, respice* etc. and thus went out through the door onto the Stations of the Cross. [...] Afterward he stood up quickly and went after his Lord, until he reached His side. And the image often seemed to him as if he was bodily at His side.)

The cloister becomes a location in which the Passion repeats itself and the servant of wisdom relives it. The servant places himself into the course of events, while in the same breath — through the use of Psalms, prayers, and epistles — adapting these events to the well-known liturgical forms. Past and present, distant and proximate trade places. At the same time, the division of stations allows for an intensification: the experience of the Passion spreads itself out over a number of distinct moments, in which various types of events — that

of the mind, see Ganz-Blättler, *Andacht und Abenteuer*, pp. 255–63.

¹² Seuse, *Deutsche Schriften*, ed. by Bihlmeyer, chap. 13, pp. 35–36.

which is in each case new and unique, the historical and recurrent, those of the present — interpenetrate one another. The individual events function as abbreviated versions of the events of the Passion, which is present as a whole in each individual event — just as the *Arma Christi*, whose popularity grew steadily from 1300, used excerpts to make the Passion accessible in new ways.¹³ The individual signs are indexical and metonymic in nature: they do not, so goes the claim, merely refer to the thing on the basis of similarity, but rather — at least *ideally* — lead to an immediate encounter with the original phenomena. The signs are not intended to join up into a narrative. Instead, they make possible, as individual units deliberately separated out from the context of the whole, the ability to call up and complete this narrative from a number of different points. It is in this sense that the introduction to a cycle of songs in the *Hohenfurter Liederbuch* (fifteenth century) declares that for a procession or a pilgrimage, one could choose ‘ainer mag jm in den ruff ain stüchel für nemmen, welches er wil. Es wär dann der weg als verr, so heb er es vor an pys an das end’ (whichever piece one liked for the song; if the way is long enough, one can sing it all the way to the end).¹⁴

Loca sancta

The procession is perhaps the most striking example of the division of the Passion into stations mentioned above — and also a striking example of the process of temporal and spatial unfolding that takes place in the process of this division.¹⁵ On the one hand, the procession is to be understood factually: Corpus Christi processions have existed since the fourteenth century and emphasize the Christological basis of salvation condensed in the Eucharist.¹⁶ Emerging somewhat later are the Good Friday processions, which come to blanket Catholic regions in the early modern era — at the same time as the stations of the cross and meditations on the stations of the cross become institutionalized.¹⁷

¹³ Berliner, ‘Arma Christi’; Suckale, ‘Arma Christi’; Schiller, *Ikongraphie der christlichen Kunst*, II, pp. 184–230; Cooper and Denny-Brown, *The Arma Christi*.

¹⁴ *Ein deutsches geistliches Liederbuch*, ed. by Bäumker, p. 17.

¹⁵ See Felbecker, *Die Prozession*; Velten and Gvozdeva, *Medialität der Passion*; in the following, I take up aspects of what I analysed there (‘Prozessionalität der Passion’, pp. 177–97).

¹⁶ See Browe, *Die Eucharistie im Mittelalter*; Niedermeier, ‘Über die Sakramentsprozessionen im Mittelalter’; Rubin, *Corpus Christi*; summarizing, see Häussling, ‘Fronleichnam’, pp. 990–91.

¹⁷ See Kneller, *Geschichte der Kreuzwegandacht*.

The procession, however, presents an imaginative musical score. It offers a paradigm for (internal) performative and processual acts, in reading or in observation.¹⁸ Intended to intensify perception and thought, it accentuates, as a ritualized form of movement in space and time, a series of events which relate to one another 'in the sense of an internal process of growing together or "concretization"'.¹⁹

Both have in turn historical as well as present dimensions. One seeks proximity to the historical locations of the Passion, the *loca sacra* or *sancta*, locations already invested with tradition.²⁰ The locations are places of memory, *in* which central moments of Christian history are preserved and *from* which this history can be set free again, transformed into living, present intuition. This takes place through a movement, which begins in a wider area (Europe/Palestine), then in a narrower one (the Holy Land, Jerusalem) divided into stages, whereby in the Holy Land the sites emerge both individually and in a single process that spans across them all.²¹ Those who studied the popular pilgrim's guide by Burchard of Monte Sion (end of the thirteenth century) found there the suggestion to perceive Jesus bodily,

as he preached in the temple, as he instructed his disciples on the Mount of Olives, as he ate his evening meal on Mount Sion, washed the feet of the disciples, gave his body and his blood, prayed in Gethsemane, dripped bloody sweat, kissed the Betrayer, was spit upon, mocked and dragged after being captured, how he as condemned must bear the cross, collapses under its weight at the gate of the city, follows along behind Simon of Cyrene and completes the mystery of the Passion for us at Calvary.

Also emphasized is that this living-out refers both to the ensemble as a whole as well as to its individual moments: 'at all and at every one of these individual places, the memory of the events is just as fresh as on the day on which they actually and bodily (*presencialiter*) took place'.²²

¹⁸ See Kiening, 'Präsenz – Memoria – Performativität'; *Literarische Performativität*, ed. by Herberichs and Kiening.

¹⁹ Beckmann, Art. 'Prozeß II.', specifically pp. 1558–60, here particularly p. 1558, with reference to Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (1929).

²⁰ Reudenbach, *Loca sancta*.

²¹ On the distinction between 'spaces' and 'places', see de Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, pp. 115–30; on Jerusalem as a place of memory, see Bieberstein, 'Jerusalem'.

²² Burchard von Monte Sion: 'Descriptio Terrae Sanctae', ed. by Laurent, here pp. 19–20: 'ut videat et audiat in templo Ihesum predicantem, in monte oliueti discipulos instruentem, in

In the late Middle Ages, ever-increasing numbers of pilgrims set out for Palestine. Their journey takes them to visit the sacred sites in Jerusalem and the surrounding area, where they use the spatial proximity to relics left over from the time of Christ to immerse themselves in his time. They become inspired by the material-symbolic images (*imagines*), whose association with the city dates back to Bernhard von Clairvaux.²³ They feed on the salvational energy present in these locations, and seek to take a piece of it home with them: in material relics, souvenirs, pilgrim's badge, sketches, images — and texts. In every case, one has to do with complex medial forms that enable transmission not just in space but also in time: in taking their lead from existing paradigms and old topoi, they produce a relation to a tradition, while at the same time loading these paradigms and topoi with the specificity of a current realization.

In this sense, the texts are, on the one hand, reports lending evidence to the information then circulating about the Holy Land; on the other, they are documents attesting to the presence of their maker at the sites of salvation, authenticating him as medium of an individual and collective experience.²⁴ Metonymic in nature and geared towards a visit of the *loca sancta* as high point, they collect in their turn metonymic moments. In the introduction to his 1479/80 travelogue, the Nuremberger Hans Tucher gives as his objective

die heiligen stete vnd besunder die ende, so Christus Jhesus vnser seligmacher in seiner heiligen menschheit sein leben vnd wesen gehabt, gewandelt, gotliche wunderwerck erzaigt vnd, vmb vnsers hails willen, sein manigueltiges pitters leiden, marter vnd tod geliden, vnd sein erlich leiplich begrebnuß erwelt vnd gehabt hat, besunder sein Heiliges Grab zu Jherusalem, vnd furbaß andere seiner lieben heiligen rastung zu besuchen.²⁵

(to visit the holy sites and particularly the locations where Christ our Saviour lived and wandered in his divine humanity, the places where he carried out wonders and

monte Sion cenantem, discipulorum pedes lauantem, corpus Suum et sanguinem tradentem, in Gethsemani orantem, sudore sanguineo defluentem, traditorem osculantem, captum trahi, illudi, conspui, iudicatum, crucem baiulantem, sub pondere crucis in porta ciuitatis [...] deficientem, Cyreneum Simonem succedentem, in Caluaria pro nobis mysteria passionis celebrantem. Horum omnium locorum et singulorum adhuc ita plena et manifesta exstat memoria, sicut in illo die exstitit, quando presencialiter erant facta.'

²³ See Raedts, 'St. Bernard of Clairvaux and Jerusalem'.

²⁴ Scholarship has described this numerous times: see Zrenner, *Die Berichte der europäischen Jerusalempilger*; Hippler, *Die Reise nach Jerusalem*; on the role of Jerusalem in the European imagination of the fourteenth century, see Yeager, *Jerusalem in Medieval Narrative*.

²⁵ Herz, *Die 'Reise ins Gelobte Land'*, 339.7–340.1.

for our salvation suffered his Passion, his torments and his death, the place where he had his real corporeal burial, and particularly the Holy Grave at Jerusalem and others of his holy places of rest.)

Like other pilgrims, Tucher describes the locations in accordance with a stereotypical pattern of movements. The basis for this pattern's stations was given by the widely distributed *Peregrinationes totius terrae sanctae*, which appear to have been compiled out of older texts by the Franciscans following their settlement in 1333 on Mount Sion, and also seem to have been supplemented with remarks on the indulgence which is to be granted at each station.²⁶ Felix Fabri mentions that he had himself bought one of the little books intended for the *processionalis peregrination*, which would have contained all of the necessary songs and texts for a visit to the holy sites.²⁷

Positioned prominently at the centre of both Latin and German texts is the visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Here in turn the Holy Sepulchre, located in the centre of the grave rotunda, was afforded particular significance — pilgrims were as a rule generally already familiar with it, through replicas and illustrations.²⁸ The ceremonial procession through the church took place in the form of a procession in rows of two, a way through the stations adapted from liturgical moments. Girnard of Schwalbach wrote in 1440:

Jtem ist ez auch eyn gewonheyt, wanne man in den tempel get, so syn vor dem tempel vnnd in dem tempel kirczen von wass gemacht gnung feyl. Da keyffet iglicher eyn kyrcz, vnnd get man zochtiglich in eyner processien, die hern vnnd prister an, vnnd dar nach ye zwene neben eyn ander zu den heiligen steden in dem tempel. Vnnd da blibet man an iglicher stadt sunderlichen sten, vnnd da verkondigen die barfußen herren eyner, waz an iglicher stadt gescheen ist vnd waz ablaß an der stadt sij. Vnnd daz dut man als dicke, als man in den tempel kommet. So sucht man die lieben heiligen stede mit der procession obgeschriben etc.²⁹

(It is now typical that when one enters the temple, one finds either immediately before it or within it wax candles offered for sale in ample supply. Everyone buys a candle, and then one moves ceremonially, with the Templar and priests in the front,

²⁶ *Fünf Palästina-Pilgerberichte*, ed. by Herz, Huschenbett, and Sczesny, p. 28, n. 58; See also Paulus, 'Die Ablässe der Kreuzwegandacht'; Hippler, *Die Reise nach Jerusalem*, pp. 125–26.

²⁷ *Fratris Felicis Fabri Evagatorium*, ed. by Hassler, 1, 244: 'in quibus omnes versiculi, collectae, responsoria signantur et hymni et psalmi circa loca sancta legenda et cantanda per omnia loca transmarinae peregrinationis.'

²⁸ On the images, see Betschart, *Zwischen zwei Welten*, pp. 118–27.

²⁹ *Fünf Palästina-Pilgerberichte*, ed. by Herz, Huschenbett, and Sczesny, p. 128.

in rows of two to the sacred sites in the temple. There is a rest at every location, and one of the Templars announces what took place here and what indulgence is granted here. This is done as often as one enters the temple. Every time, the honoured sacred sites are visited in the manner of the procession described.)

In an anonymous Bavarian text from the same era, the pilgrims are described as follows:

So kömen sy wider fur den heyligen tempel vnd schicken sich, dar ein zw gen mit der andechtigen processen, die sy thün mit verslosner thür. Vnd sind merklich x heylig stet jn wendig. Zw yeglicher stat singet man ain sunder lobgesang vnd spricht da knienent ainen psalm vnd ain collect von dem leiden Cristi.³⁰

(In such a way they once again come before the sacred temple, and in entering form themselves into a reverent procession, which is then completed behind closed doors. On the inside, one sees ten sacred sites. At each one, the appropriate song of praise is sung, and while kneeling one speaks a Psalm and an altar prayer for the Passions of Christ).

The individual sites are located in distinct chapels: a chapel of the Virgin Mary is held to be the location where Christ appeared to his mother following the Resurrection. It is also, however, deemed to be the place where the wonder took place with whose aid Helena determined the true cross, and where now, in a barred window, the Flagellation of Christ stands. Other chapels show the dungeon in which the suffering Christ was held prisoner; the marble block he was sitting upon, as the Crown of Thorns was placed upon his head; the hole in which the cross was placed; and the gravestone upon which Mary rested with her dead son in her lap, following the deposition from the cross. Placed in-between in the procession is the encounter with the stone, which Helena sat upon as the Jews sought the cross, and the encounter with the cliff walls under Calvary, where cross, nails, spear, and crown of thorns were found. The procession is then led further outside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, through a visitation of the sacred sites upon Mount Zion, then along the way up to the Lion's Gate. This is followed by a visitation of Solomon's temple and the sacred sites in the outskirts of Jerusalem: the valley of Josaphat, the Garden of Gethsemane, then Bethlehem and Bethania as well; an excursion to Saint Catherine's Monastery on Sinai can also be added on.³¹

³⁰ *Fünf Palästina-Pilgerberichte*, ed. by Herz, Huschenbett, and Sczesny, p. 52.

³¹ On the paradigms, see Jahn, *Raumkonzepte in der Frühen Neuzeit*, pp. 67–120.

What arises in this manner is an ensemble of moments from the Passion. This ensemble is not linear in nature. It is, to be certain, linked to a movement-*syn-tagm*, but this is not compulsory. One can begin the way at different points, even from the end. In every case, it produces the *paradigm* of the Passion, which draws upon the plenitude of the material givens and the fullness of historical moments. The large number of locations and the proximity make a chronological ordering difficult and can even lead to confusion: in his *Evagatorium*, Felix Fabri speaks of the peculiarity that in the Holy Land, one first encounters the traces or footprints of the Resurrected Christ, and then those of the Crucified One. He concludes from this that a great mystery lies in the apparent chronological reversal: what is shown through this, on Fabri's account, is that all striving towards Heaven can only succeed through a carrying of the cross (*bajulatio crucis*).³²

The consequence of this situation is that the texts orient themselves according to topography, and not chronology — while nonetheless affording the temporal dimension a decisive role. Locations from the Old and New Testament, from early church history and even the anticipated End Times (the Valley of Josaphat) are touched upon in succession. In the face of sacred locations, expectations of meaning flow into a nearly overwhelming creation of meaning. Every stone and spring, every tree and ruin, every part of the way and the fields acquires a location in Salvation History: through the same gate that Jesus was led up Calvary, Abel went — so it is said — to the location of his death, and Isaac brought in the wood that was to serve for his own sacrifice.³³ Such associations show the typologically related to also be topologically and historically linked. The central Christological sites appear in immediately evident relationship both to their prehistory as well as to their post-history. For example, various locations are associated with Helena and the history of the discovery of the cross. This makes it possible to encounter two types of phenomena at each location: the fundamentals of the Christian religion and the monuments of an early institutionalization, transformation, and translation of Christian foundations.

In both cases, what is at stake is, first of all, the concrete form of historical remnants, which are more or less precisely recorded in the reports. More important, however, is the fundamental connection between location and event, which the texts evoke and offer to their readers' imaginations. The series of events is on the one hand reproduced as historic, on the other withdrawn from the realm of the historical — meaning — that in each case, new, not origi-

³² *Fratris Felicis Fabri Evagatorium*, ed. by Hassler, I, 240.

³³ Prescott, *Jerusalem Journey*, p. 125.

nally immediately linked events come together and acquire a new contemporaneity. As, for example, when accompanying illustrations show not the locations, but rather the original events: in Jörg Pfinzing's travelogue of 1445, four pen drawings with Passion scenes have been inserted; in Francesco di Alessandro da Modena's travelogue of 1516, there are five representations of scenes from Christ's life.³⁴

One of the texts' most important tasks, alongside the simple fact of documentation, was to make the journey into something that could be repeated in the imaginary realm.³⁵ This would enable non-travelling (or no-longer travelling) readers to recreate and follow the first journey. In this manner, the increasing historicization of the Passion lived from the relationships of exchange between near and far. At the same time, this historicization went hand in hand with an interiorization that detemporalized the historical sequence of events, making them ubiquitously accessible. For the texts, this means that within them, concrete, imaginative, and transposed spaces and times interpenetrate and overlap one another in what are in each case unique ways. In terms of function and effect, there is no strict distinction between those that refer to an actual journey and those that refer to a pilgrimage that takes place only in the mind.³⁶ Both use performative strategies in order to make the holy sites present in the homeland. And both address not only the travellers in the distance but also the readers and observers in one's immediate surroundings. These latter possess with respect to the former a substantial advantage: the absence of heat, disorder, and noisy pilgrims set on souvenirs means that they require less effort to put their minds in the contemplative mood appropriate for the holy locations. In the introduction to his *Sionpilger* (1492), a journey in the mind composed primarily for nuns, Felix Fabri lists a number of the nuisances one might encounter along the way. Although himself an enthusiastic *peregrinator*, Fabri does this in order to show the difficulties that could be avoided by those who made their pilgrimages in spirit and with the aid of his book.³⁷

³⁴ Betschart, *Zwischen zwei Welten*, p. 141.

³⁵ See Zwijnenburg-Tönnies, 'Die Kreuzwegandacht und die deutschen Pilgertexte des Mittelalters'.

³⁶ On the mental pilgrimage, see Ganz-Blättler, *Andacht und Abenteuer*, pp. 255–63; Herbers, 'Spiritualité nouvelle ou mécanisme religieux'; Miedema, *Rompilgerführer in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, pp. 389–462; Rudy, 'A Virtual Pilgrimage for Holy Week'; Lehmann-Brauns, *Jerusalem sehen*.

³⁷ *Fratris Felicis Fabri Evagatorium*, ed. by Hassler, I, 250: 'se excitare ad actualem devotionem et ad contemplationem.'

For their part, the spiritual pilgrimages deal with spatial and temporal dimensions in entirely distinct ways.³⁸ Many texts deriving from the context of pilgrim brotherhoods preach a 'walking with the mouth' in the form of uniformly repeated prayers. For a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, one was supposed to say 12,000 *Pater nosters* and just as many *Ave Marias*. This number reflected the real distance between Jerusalem and Upper Swabia. However, true importance lay not in the destination but rather in the way: divided into the smallest prayer intervals, the way is experienced temporally as a structure of repetition, and spatially as the ubiquitous presence of Salvation. Fabri, however, opts for a different method. In the passage through the days of a year, he touches upon all the 'places that appear in the readings of the epistles' and leads the nuns through a space of divine Salvational effects, supplementing the traditional figures for the mediation of Salvation with Order-specific (here Dominican) figures. In doing so, the pilgrim's way appears to him 'to only serve as a background enabling one to make present specific contents (otherwise unused in the liturgy of the ecclesiastical year and the saints' days) in a new order — and in a spatial configuration which was mnemotechnically favourable'.³⁹

In this manner, the description of the movement from one holy place to another joined up with the statements of the corresponding ecclesiastical songs. Upon the pilgrims' entrance into the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, we read that the priests form a processional order, and when all pilgrims are present with their pilgrim books, the cantor begins the hymn *Ave maris stella*. The procession comes to the Chapel of the Virgin Mary while singing verse after verse. There, the pilgrims sing an antiphon of the cross and the hymn *Originale crimen*; there are also indulgences there.⁴⁰

In the manuscript, the hymns and antiphonies are always emphasized through red ink. This makes the procession into an audible one for the liturgically schooled readers, while cross symbols, drawn in red ink, make the indul-

³⁸ On the following, see Klingner, 'Reisen zum Heil'.

³⁹ Klingner, 'Reisen zum Heil', p. 71.

⁴⁰ Fabri, *Die Sionpilger*, ed. by Carls, 113.8–12; 114.5–7: 'Da ordent die priester ain process · vnd so die process in der ordnung stät · vnd alle bilgrin da seind · mit irem processional biechli · so hebt die singerin an den ymps · Aue maris stella et cetera · Vnd singen vers umb vers · vnd mit dem gesangkumpt die proceß in die capell marie [...]. Da singen die bilgrin · Antiffen · von dem crütz · vnd den ymps · *Originale crimen necans et cetera vnd ist da † ablas*.' On the text, see Classen, 'Imaginary Experience of the Divine'; Herbers, 'Felix Fabris "Sionpilgrin"'; Beebe, 'Reading Mental Pilgrimage in Context'; Lehmann-Brauns, *Jerusalem sehen*, chap. 5; Klingner, 'Reisen zum Heil'.

gence into something attainable in the here and now as well. This is the case even where a text offers barely more than a list-like enumeration of sacred locations. Here too signs of the cross can create a minimal scaffolding, capable of being worked up into a moving image of historical events. These signs also allow for a doubled transposition: from the Palestinian context into a Central European one, and from the collective of the pilgrims to that of the readers.

Transpositions

One factor in such transpositions is that of comparison: between specific proportions and forms, or even between general phenomena in the Holy Land and in the homeland.⁴¹ Another factor is the numerical: The figure recorded in the text which gives the respective number of indulgence years is intended for the pilgrims, but also holds relevance for the readers.⁴² The reported sizes of buildings and objects, as well as the distances between the *loca sancta*, assert a claim to be based upon measurements made on the spot.⁴³ But just as this latter often takes recourse to prior accounts of distances available to the author, so it also incites acts of renewed measurements in the spirit or on the reproduction. These then feed in their turn upon the facticity of a completed movement. In the case of Hans Tucher, this occurs not only punctually but also in more extended — and detailed — fashion. In a letter to his brother, written in 1479, as well as a travelogue written shortly thereafter, he develops parallels between the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and the Church of St Sebald in Nuremberg for several pages. The latter can be held to be a paradigm for salvational spaces steeped in diverse earthly and transcendent temporalities.⁴⁴ Although the chapel in Nuremberg is, as Tucher reports, somewhat larger than its counterpart in length and breadth, it is nonetheless the case that comparing the two churches ‘die heiligen stet jm tempel einem desterpaß jngedenck sein zu mercken’ (allows for all the better preservation in memory of the holy locations in the Temple).⁴⁵ The re-memorization of the Passion takes place in a complex memorial space: one in which Jerusalem and Nuremberg are super-

⁴¹ Esch, ‘Anschauung und Begriff’.

⁴² See Angenendt and others, ‘Gezählte Frömmigkeit’.

⁴³ See Reichert, *Erfahrung der Welt*, pp. 146ff.

⁴⁴ See Weilandt, *Die Sebalduskirche in Nürnberg*.

⁴⁵ Herz, *Die ‘Reise ins Gelobte Land’*, 391.3ff.; Jahn, *Raumkonzepte in der Frühen Neuzeit*, pp. 73–77.

imposed on top of one another; one in which the origin of Mass celebrations appears in the present ceremony; one in which the historical origins of salvation coincide with one's own salvational hopes — Tucher knew that he himself 'would be buried in St Sebald'.⁴⁶

An additional insight can emerge when the Holy Sepulchre is compared with an imitation of it. Such is the case for the Nuremberg patrician Stefan Baumgartner, who in 1498 travelled from Saxony to the Holy Land with Henry IV the Pious, duke of Saxony. Baumgartner records the following in a handwritten report about his visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre: 'Item dornach gingen mier mit der proceß vonn derselbigen stadt inn tempel zu dem heyiligen grab. Ist ein klein kirchlein, gefurmet alß das zu Nurmberg auff dem spital kirchoff stet' (Afterwards, we went with the procession into the Temple of the Holy Sepulchre, which is a tiny little church shaped like the one in Nuremberg in the Spital church courtyard).⁴⁷ What emerges from the text is a multi-stage oscillation between here and there: the (Nurembergian, to give but one example) readers follow the path of one of their countrymen into the Holy Land, who then for his part orients himself according to things in his homeland which had previously been 'transported' to Nuremberg from the Holy Land.

The stay in Palestine appears at one and the same time as both past and present: like other authors, Hans Tucher moves constantly back and forth between temporal registers. The description of his own way is in the preterit ('afterward we went with the processions', 402.9), while the description of the locations is in the present tense ('there stands a broad, round church', 402.11). In this way, the event of having been in the Holy Land becomes in the same breath both an individual historical-factual occurrence as well as one, which is contemporary and repeatable for other individuals. The historical-factual dimension is further underscored through the numeric indications (mentioned above) regarding times and spaces — indications which in each case attest to a kind of personal inspection. In pursuing one of these inspections, Sebald Rieter even appears to have climbed onto the roof of the interior Holy Sepulchre chapel and 'recorded the static load-bearing functions of the division of the pillars'.⁴⁸ Tucher for his part admittedly takes numerous pieces of information from the travel diary of his predecessor Rieter, but he also corrects and personalizes them. On one of his notes, transmitted by the humanist Hartmann Schedel, he gives the meas-

⁴⁶ Jahn, *Raumkonzepte in der Frühen Neuzeit*, p. 74.

⁴⁷ Baumgartner, *Reise zum Heiligen Grab 1498*, pp. 37–38.

⁴⁸ Zittlau, *Heiliggrabkapelle und Kreuzweg*, p. 96.

urements of the Holy Sepulchre and its internal dimensions according to his own shoe size.⁴⁹ At the same time, he relates them to the depiction of the Holy Sepulchre in the Holy Sepulchre Chapel at Nuremberg (created in 1459 by the merchant Jörg Ketzler), which was supposed to date back to a pilgrimage into the Holy Land. According to Tucher, the prevailing opinion was that the Sepulchre in Nuremberg resembled the one in Jerusalem; in fact, however, the one in Jerusalem was nothing like the one here ('nindert gleich dem hiigen'). Thus, a claim of authenticity predicated upon the factor of experience was also taken into account for architectonic imitations as well — these latter had served as the basis from which the 'presentifying' memory of the Passion lived and as the source from which many churches claimed their institutional validity.⁵⁰

This experience, forged at the sites of the Passion, is transformed in the pilgrim's report into an experience for readers — and this in a doubled movement.⁵¹ Tucher begins by depicting the way to the procession's point of departure. He emphasizes three stations: the location of the deposition from the cross, the chapel of the Holy Sepulchre, and the chapel of the Virgin Mary. From the very beginning, they are brought into relation with familiar objects: the chancel of St Catherine's within St Sebald; the Holy Cross chapel in Eichstätt, with the depiction of the Holy Sepulchre; and the chapel of the Twelve Brothers' House in Nuremberg. In each case, however, Tucher indicates that he will describe the locations with more precision only within the framework of the processional order. In this manner, 'approach' and main event appear distinct from one another. Normal and ceremonial movement from station to station diverge. That which is suggested in the former is realized only in the latter. This second, ceremonial procession finds its point of departure in the chapel of the Virgin Mary: as *devout procession* (394.4) which proceeds with burning candles and antiphons and emerges into the respective stations with the naming of the indulgence to be acquired there. These details make concrete that which was recorded in general fashion at the beginning: those who enter the church on Calvary in Christian faith and good disposition have earned a forgiveness of all sins (392.4). At the same time, this leads to a circular structure: still within the

⁴⁹ Herz, 'Briefe Hans Tuchers d. Ä.'.

⁵⁰ On reconstructions of the Holy Sepulchre, see, for example, Maisel, *Sepulchrum domini*, as well as a number of works by Dieterich, 'Anastasis-Rotunde und Heiliges Grab in Jerusalem'; Dieterich, 'Das Konstanzer Heilige Grab'. On the instances of measurement and experience, see Kiening, "'Erfahrung" und "Vermessung" der Welt in der frühen Neuzeit'.

⁵¹ Quotes from Herz, *Die 'Reise ins Gelobte Land'*.

framework of a comparison with the church of St Sebald, Tucher refers back multiple times during his descent from Calvary to the beginning of the procession: 'just as said earlier, when one had first gone into the temple (402.1ff.), as in the outskirts of Eichstätt, as I have written about earlier, at the beginning of the temple (402.12ff.), as said earlier, when one began the processions (403.10ff.)'. He thus creates a framework which carries the manifold processional-ity of the movement into a complex processuality of the text.

Ways and Paths

For the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the stations of the cross always appear meaningful in and of themselves. The description of the way of the cross to Calvary, however, hews in most pilgrims' reports closely to the order of the historical way. Here as well, however, syntagmatic and paradigmatic dimensions interpenetrate one another. (Figure 4.1 shows a sketch map created by Hans Tucher.) A preliminary remark from his brother Endres notes that the map is a product of a lengthy stay in Jerusalem, which owing to circumstances took place before Hans's departure to Saint Catherine's monastery on Sinai: 'In der selben zeit do weisset in der gardian von den parfussen dissen weg und anderß, und saget in von den geschichten etc. den weg sie dor noch offt mit andacht gingen und abmassen oder ab schritten etc' (At the same time, the Guardian of the Carthusians showed them this way and others, and told them the corresponding stories (amongst other things). Then, they often went along this way devoutly, measuring it or stepping it off).⁵² The way is thus experienced on the one hand as a syntagm (of steps); on the other hand, what becomes manifest *on this way* in paradigmatic fashion are the stories associated *with it*. And both in turn want to make the record of the way accessible to experience, by naming moments of the Passion narrative and communicating information about the distance between the individual stations: 'Von dem puncktlein der 200 schridt, so sein 85 schridt piß auf das eck etc. An dem eck sanck Christus nider untter dem kreucz. Do nötten sie Simon Cireneus, das er dem Heren Jhesu musst helffen das kreucz thragen' (It is 85 steps from the 200-step-point to the corner, etc. On this corner, Christ sank to the ground under the burden of the cross. There they forced Simon of Cyrene to help Jesus carry the cross).⁵³

⁵² Herz, 'Briefe Hans Tuchers d. Ä.', 78.5–7.

⁵³ Herz, 'Briefe Hans Tuchers d. Ä.', 78.21–23.



Figure 4.1. Hans Tucher, *Zeichnung des Kreuzweges*.
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Rés. O²f. 13 ad 1, fol. 6^r.
Reproduced with permission.

The sketch map survived because Endres had it bound into his personal copy of the print of Hans's travelogue. He did the same with a copy of the letter that Hans sent him from the Holy Land on 6 August 1479. According to Endres, this letter went through so many eager hands that the original version 'was entirely torn and damaged'. Thus, here too metonymies of metonymies: the letter is an authentic witness to the presence of the Nuremberger Hans Tucher in the Holy Land. At the same time, it serves as a proxy for the one who has apparently not yet returned home. Taken up into the codex, it becomes a memorial sign ('a memory') — one which by virtue of being handwritten possesses a particular degree of authenticity. In the codex, it coincides with other documents that also oscillate between here and there, between the event of reading and that of observing, between the event of the stay in the Holy Land and that of the Passion.

Tucher's sketch map shows the itinerary of Christ's final path within the framework of celestial bodies and cardinal directions. The way leads from the ascent of the sun to its descent, that is, from east to west — that direction of movement, which was generally held in the Middle Ages to be that of the march of history as well.⁵⁴ But the map not only symbolizes Christ's way in the sense of the universality of Salvation History: it also makes possible a double reading. At first glance, it offers a linear depiction of the way, with Pilate's palace as the beginning and Golgotha as end-point. Upon closer inspection, however, it becomes a multilayered and circular structure — one first disclosed upon turning the page. This is the result of distinct directions of writing. If one begins at the geographic point of departure, Pilate's palace, then one must begin in the lower-right corner (with the word *auffgang* (ascent) below standing upside down) and proceed to read the individual paragraphs from bottom to top. Here, however, one acquires only rudimentary information about the individual stations, mostly about the distances between them. If one wants to know more, one has to turn the sheet sideways (so that the word *auffgang* is on the right), and read the right-hand paragraphs from top to bottom. As it turns out, these paragraphs go together with those on the other side of the line marking the way, as the line leading down the middle and the attachment of small arcs makes clear. Thus, one travels for a second time from the house of Pilates to Golgotha, this time receiving information about the events linked to the various locations. If, on the one side, one had read only 'From Pilates' house up to the little point, it is 200 steps etc.', one can now read: 'There stood Maria and

⁵⁴ See Maurmann, *Die Himmelsrichtungen*; Kugler, 'Himmelsrichtungen und Erdregionen'.

saw Jesus departing and fell unconscious etc.’ (78.19ff.). If, however, one wants to understand the connection between the notes on event, location and distance, one has to continually turn the sheet this way and that. The text appears to reflect this when it says: ‘when one places the books in the four places, one actually sees how [...]’ (77.17ff.).

What is offered here is a model for the spatial visualization of the way of the cross and its stations — a model that goes beyond what is characteristic of other maps and diagrams that contain multiple directions of reading.⁵⁵ Perception is made dynamic and the imagination is stimulated in a very specific manner: the moments of the Passion are mentally joined up into a whole alongside the diagrammatic and textual elements. The production of the syntagm goes hand in hand with an opening towards the paradigm of the events of the Passion (indicated as such through the ‘etc.’ signs). What opens up for experience is in equal measure the teleological linearity of the events as well as their multiple interlinkages. At the same time, the event of encounter with the locations of the Passion is relocated from abroad into one’s homeland. This emerges in immediate fashion from the foreword to the map. On the lower left side, above the indication *vnterganck* (descent), Hans Tucher writes summarily of the 1,050 steps to be covered from Pilate’s palace to the location of the crucifixion. Endres, in his foreword, relates this number to a Nurembergian ‘way of the cross’: ‘So weit ist hie zu Nurembergk von dem newen thor piß an den goczaker pei Sant Johannis. Das hot man abgeschritten und do auff dem goczaker eigenlichen geschriben vor etlichen jaren, und ee mein pruder, der Hans Tucher senior, uber mere fure’ (it is just this far here in Nuremberg from the New Gate to the cemetery at St Johann’s. This has been stepped off and explicitly fixed in writing in the cemetery — and this before my brother, Hans Tucher Senior, began his journey into the Holy Land).⁵⁶ Through this remark, the medial dimension acquires a further nuance. It becomes clear that sacred sites and the real movements between them do not stand on one side of a division, over and across from the medial forms that mediate them (letter, map, travelogue). Instead, experience itself is already shaped by mediations (the notice in the cemetery). They determine what can be experienced at all.

⁵⁵ On such diagrammatic models, see Sicard, *Diagrammes médiévaux et exégèse visuelle*, and Müller, *Visuelle Weltaneignung*.

⁵⁶ Herz, ‘Briefe Hans Tuchers d. Ä.’, 77.11–14.

Reconstructions

One only occasionally finds devotions linked to ways of the cross in the fifteenth century. It is first in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that, spurred on by the Counter Reformation and now unified into fourteen stations, they really begin to come into their own.⁵⁷ An interesting feature of the early constructions replicating the way of the cross is that they mostly arose in relation to those returning home from the Holy Land. These repatriates transported not only the knowledge but also the salvational energy that fuelled the constructions. Sometime before 1420, Alvaro of Cordoba created a way of the cross in the area around his hometown, in the form of a staircase ascending up to the Scala Coeli cloister. The first examples in German-speaking areas arose around 1468 in Lübeck and Görlitz. In the case of the latter, the story goes that Georg Emmerich, son of a rich merchant, impregnated the daughter of a neighbour and refused marriage; conscience-stricken, he undertook in 1465 a pilgrimage to Jerusalem which led to an absolution of his sins. Shortly thereafter, an imitation of the Holy Sepulchre appeared whose precision substantially exceeded other imitations of the era.⁵⁸

To be certain, Nuremberg had possessed a Corpus Christi procession since somewhere between 1336 and 1340. However, a way of the cross was not conceivable until around 1500: the sculptor Adam Krafft created monuments containing (here as elsewhere) seven stations: the so-called 'falls' plus crucifixion and entombment. These likely influenced other Frankish constructions appearing shortly thereafter.⁵⁹ The statement from Endres Tucher quoted above thus seems to attest to the presence of a construction in Nuremberg predating 1479. Above all, however, it demonstrates how much a reflection on the individual stations of the Passion of Christ moved in this time between two points of reference: the monumental remains of the Holy Land and the memorial imitations in the homeland. Both groups have metonymic character: the one because it derives from the origins themselves, the other because they have come into contact with those origins through the acts of the pilgrim. Through indications

⁵⁷ See Kneller, *Geschichte der Kreuzwegandacht*; Picard, 'Croix (chemin de)'.

⁵⁸ Meinert, *Die Heilig-Grab-Anlage in Görlitz*; Anders and Winzeler, *Lausitzer Jerusalem*; Kühnel and Arad, *Jerusalem elsewhere*.

⁵⁹ See Zittlau, *Heiliggrabkapelle und Kreuzweg*; Wegmann, 'Der Kreuzweg des Adam Kraft in Nürnberg'; Wegmann, 'Der Kreuzweg des Adam Kraft im Spiegel spätmittelalterlicher Frömmigkeit'.

of distance or the number of steps, this contact could be inscribed in quasi-corporeal manner into the reconstructions themselves.

However, even these concretized reconstructions were only expedients for a reflection that had to be carried out internally: in a space in which *visio* and *imaginatio* interlock with one another. This is a central concern for written and printed books on the stations of the cross as well. A middle-Dutch Franciscan manuscript from the middle of the fifteenth century begins with a discussion of the twelve stations that are to be stepped off in the mind as well

then, when you are walking, imagine to yourself that you see our Lord before you as he bears the cross. He's bent far towards the earth with his crowned head, and he often falls against the sharp stones, such that the crown of thorns pressed into his head and neck, which caused him particular anguish. [...] Join the aggrieved mother and look at her often, see how her virgin heart was so aggrieved.⁶⁰

A southern German manuscript from the end of the fifteenth century, today in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris, served as an expedient for private devotion. This latter begins at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and proceeds through the stations of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to the other sacred locations. In each case, an illustration of the station is followed by the corresponding prayer texts.⁶¹ The widely known booklet of the priest of Bethlehem, furnished with information about distances and indulgences, extends the way to Calvary through a depiction of the full sufferings of Christ, distributed across the seven days of the week.⁶²

A book on the stations of the cross entitled *Die geystlich straß* (The Spiritual Street), published in 1521 in Nuremberg, already referred explicitly in its introduction to the current tendency to construct ways of the cross.⁶³ The anonymous author first criticizes what is in part a merely aesthetic perception of the representations of the Passion:

⁶⁰ Kneller, *Geschichte der Kreuzwegandacht*, pp. 149–50.

⁶¹ Rudy, 'A Guide to Mental Pilgrimage'.

⁶² Kneller, *Geschichte der Kreuzwegandacht*, pp. 153–59; Huschenbett, 'Priester Bethlem', pp. 835–37.

⁶³ Title: *Die maynung diß büchleins: Die geystlich straß bin ich genant, im leyden Christi wol bekant* (Nuremberg: Gutknecht, 1521) (forty leaves, VD 16 G 979). The text has been attributed to the Franciscan Nikolaus Wanckel, who, following a sixteen-year period in the Holy Land, had written in 1517 the *Kurtze vermerkung der heyligen Stet des heyligen landts*; See Herz, 'Wanckel, Nikolaus' (without confirmation of the attribution).

wiewol vil des leydens christi bildnuß sein zu kirchen vnd strassen / so ist doch wenig mitleydung zu anschawung solcher bildung / wan mer seind die menschen höfflich besichtiger solcher bildnuß / warzunemen der kunst / farb / wolgestalt / possierung vnd der gleichen / dann andechtig betrachter des leydens / dann mancher besichtig offt ein tafel / oder steet vor einem bild / zu kirchen oder strassen / da vor er nit ein Aue maria pet oder kain gedancken hat auff bedeutung der figur / oder auch kain eer erbeut.⁶⁴

(Even if there are many statues of Christ's sufferings in the churches and on the streets, one nonetheless sees little compassion in their inspection. People behave more like artsy observers who pay more attention to the colour, the artfulness, the form and sculptural *Gestalt* etc. than to devotional immersion into his suffering. Many look at a wooden panel painting or stand before a sculpture in the church or on the street without praying a single *Ave maria*, or even wasting a single thought on the meaning of the image — not to speak of conferring some sort of honour upon it.)

In any case, there were others willing to train themselves in compassion and have images produced for this end. These showed parts of the events of the Passion, or even the entire sequence:

die außführung vnter dem creutz/ mit so vil mitteln/ artikeln/ als geschicht sein gewest/ biß er kummen ist zum perg Caluarie/ als da ist die begegnung Marie/ Simonis bezwingung/ begegnung Veronice/ vnd der gleich/ die man yetzund vil auffricht/ mit jren zilen vnd maß oder weyten/ wie dann die maß vom heyligen landt/ von Fürsten vnd herren im heyligen landt gewest/ angezaygt wirt.⁶⁵

(the way of the cross with all its elements and parts, as they correspond to the events all the way up to reaching Calvary, i.e., Christ's encounter with Maria, the compulsion of Simon, the encounter with Veronica and more. This is represented a lot these days, with consideration for measurements and distances according to the information being delivered by those who have travelled to the Holy Land.)

The book offers a paradigm for such constructions. At the same time, however, it wants to function independently of them. By means of the stations, the sufferings of Christ are to be made accessible 'to the eyes, the mouth and the heart through the depiction (*figur*), its observation and prayer, through the example (*exemplar*) of this book'.⁶⁶ The author of this text, which contains fif-

⁶⁴ *Die maynung diß büchleins*, fol. [1^v].

⁶⁵ *Die maynung diß büchleins*, fol. [2^r].

⁶⁶ *Die maynung diß büchleins*, fol. [2^r]: 'den augen/ dem munt/ vnnd dem hertzen/ durch figur/ betrachtung/ vnd gebet/ durch exemplar diß buchs'.

teen stations in total, explains at great length why he has not concentrated on the actual 'ways' and 'falls', but rather has presented the entire series of events 'von Bethania biß zum creutz' (from Bethany to the cross) and condensed different moments into station. He writes that he has also included the deposition from the cross and entombment in order to show the processual sequence of the events of the Passion as a whole ('to make the passion complete').⁶⁷ This should render possible both a corporeal as well as an imaginary movement, one of exteriorizing measurement as well as one of interiorizing re-enactment. The indications regarding distances at the sacred locations open up a historical space of events which is on the one hand capable of being made present, and on the other internalizable. It is, as he writes, not always necessary to proceed as many steps as indicated: 'much better is to have journeyed much and far with the heart and prayer / than with feet'.⁶⁸

Meditation on the sufferings of Christ is referred a further time to material and historical metonymies. At the same time, it is linked to the imagination, in which the metonymically individual becomes a unity of meaning. But one also sees this model run up against its limits. The booklet is already hybrid at the level of its construction. Every chapter consists of five parts: alongside a woodcutting (Fig. 4.2) showing the event in the form of a wayside cross and a summarizing introduction (which gives details on the particular 'way') are the corresponding text of the Gospels (insofar as it was available), the psalms associated with the scene, and a concluding remark on the nature of the holy locations in Palestine. The character of the *Spiritual Street* is hybrid as well. It wants to offer both a narrative of the Passion as well as approaches for its interpretation. It wants to be at the same time devotional book, pilgrim's guide, and manual for the construction of ways of the cross. It wants to enable the user to choose and change between different modes of experience, ranging from reading or prayer to observation or imagination. The possibility of immersing oneself in the events of the Passion and making these latter present is here now only one of many. The didactic and reflective gesture dominates. But what is missing from the little booklet is thus precisely that which was decisive for the pil-

⁶⁷ *Die maynung diß büchleins*, fol. [2^r]: 'den passion volkommen zu machen.' See also the remark toward the end of the text (on anointment), fol. [38^r]: 'Dise abnemung vom creutz vnd trugung zu der schoß Marie wirt nit gerechnet fur ein gang des herren/ darumb das er nit gelebt hat/ auch nit gelitten oder schmerzen gehabt. Aber von gentze wegen des proceß des heyligen Passions/ mag das geordnet werden mit seinem standt/ als die andern geng.'

⁶⁸ *Die maynung diß büchleins*, fol. [3^r]: 'vil besser ist vil vnd weyt gangen mit dem hertzen vnd gebet/ dann mit den füßen'

grims' travelogues: the promise not only to present metonymies of the Passion, but also to *be* metonymies of its temporal and spatial persistence. In other words: what recedes here is precisely that interlacing of time (as both past and present) and space (as both distant and near) in a specific medial form that was itself affected by this interlacing.

The little booklet on the way of the cross is not alone in this tendency. In making salvational history present, other text and image types from the same time direct attention towards the mode of representation. To give one example, a play performed in the week following the 1510 Corpus Christi procession in Munich has been preserved in the form of an illustrated devotional book, filled with quotes from the Bible and ecclesiastic authorities.⁶⁹ The book does not simply show the course of salvation history but rather shows the temporal and spatial structure of mediation that exists within it, in the form of mediators and liminal realms (Purgatory). This structure

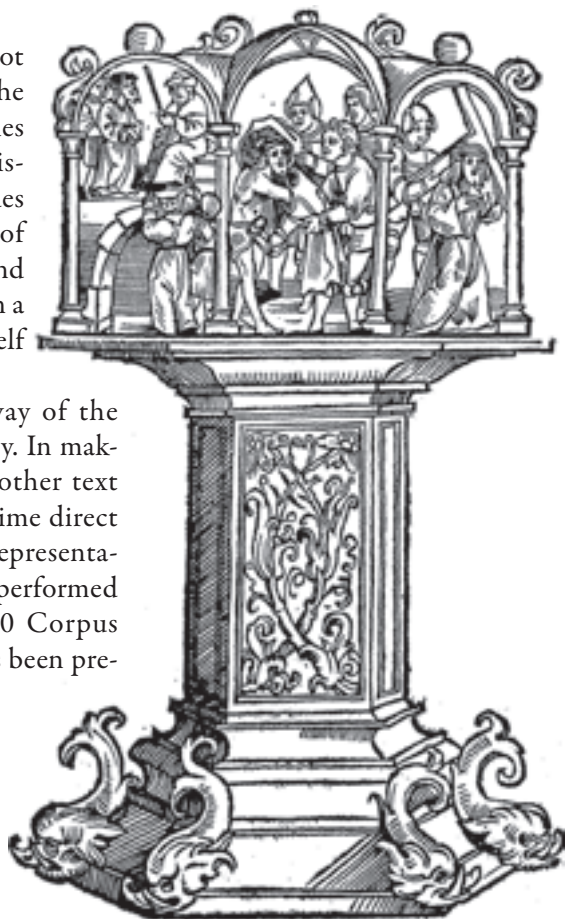


Figure 4.2. *Die maynung | diß büchleins: | Die geystlich
straß bin ich genant* (Nuremberg: Gutknecht 1521),
fol. F [4^r]. Reproduced with permission.

in turn establishes various options for Man. A first portion shows how Satan indicts a sinful humanity, how God the Father threatens to destroy it, and how the threat is intercepted through a chain of mediations (Man's supplication to Mary, Mary's to Jesus, Jesus to God the Father). Three further sections offer scenarios from salvational history: death and damnation of a young man with worldly inclinations; the death and judgement of three people: one condemned

⁶⁹ *Drei Schauspiele*, ed. by Bolte, pp. 1–62; on the text, see Kiening, *Schwierige Modernität*.

to Purgatory, another to damnation, and another selected for salvation; finally, the fate of souls in Purgatory.

While the opening constellation suggested the factual presence of instances from salvational history, the following scenarios are exemplary in nature. They are not shaped as immediate encounters with the transcendent but rather as theatrical visualizations embedded in a dialog between a young merchant, worried about the salvation of his soul, and a scholar who transmits knowledge of salvation and preaches penitence. This scholar shows the merchant the scenes as didactic schematics, intended to transmit a certain experience of time: to recognize the finitude and ephemerality of one's own lifetime and thus to orient oneself toward eternity. As such, the central paradox of salvation history (as a temporal-supratemporal plenitude) is admittedly preserved. However, the tension between time and eternity is stretched to the limit: what is offered as figure for identification in the merchant is an embodiment like no other of an innerworldly, self-oriented temporal consciousness that began to appear in the late Middle Ages.⁷⁰ The vehemence with which the play recalls the limits of its own temporal perception also indicates the dominance this latter had already acquired in the tie around 1500.

⁷⁰ See Le Goff, 'Zeit der Kirche und Zeit des Händlers im Mittelalter'; see also the critical engagement with this in Dohrn-van Rossum, *Die Geschichte der Stunde*.

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MAPPING TIME AT THE THRESHOLD OF MODERNITY

Martina Stercken

The time at the threshold between the Middle Ages and the early modern era is regarded as a period of major change, not only in terms of technology and dissemination of knowledge but also with regard to the notion, the experience, and the concepts of time and history. This general observation also applies to the exploration of maps, and especially world maps, which apparently undergo a shift from a world-view embedded in God's salvation plan and divine order, shown by the visual intertwining of geographical settings and salvation history, to a mathematically measured and abstract way of presenting the world as part of an infinite and demythologized universe.¹ At the end of this development, the mapping of the world no longer forms part of historiography, and no longer explains time as part of the biblical history between Paradise and the Last Judgement; instead, it becomes a more and more independent technique emphasizing the measurability of geographical features.

Though these general observations are widely acknowledged, the practices of this cartographical transformation process have not yet been studied systematically; instead, the history of cartography has long been focused on technical progress. However, it has become clear that despite the new possibilities of cartographical representation, of printing, and of distribution, which certainly had a major impact on the conditions of mapping, there was no distinct caesura in the cultural modes of cartography. On the one hand, it has been observed

¹ Edson, *Mapping Time and Space*; von den Brincken, 'Mappa mundi'.

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that mapping the world in the Middle Ages meant positioning mankind within the framework of salvation history, and that different forms representing geography and topography had already been in use for a long time, particularly from the thirteenth century onwards;² on the other hand, investigations into the written and pictorial tradition from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries have shown that there was a rather long period of discovering new models for the interpretation of time and space, and of trying out combinations of images and writing in order to describe the historical and spatial dimensions of the world.³ Scholars have also discussed how the slow displacement of cartographical production from the monastic to more profane spheres, as well as humanism and the Reformation, helped to change the perception of time and to produce new schemas for defining the history of humanity.⁴

Investigating how time was mapped at the threshold between the Middle Ages and the early modern period follows a path in map history which is explored more and more. It forms part of a major change in the perspective of the discipline, which is no longer interested first and foremost in the success story of cartographical technology, and focused on measurement, accuracy, standards, and the dissemination of maps, but which considers them as man-made historical products that visualize, constitute, and conceive the world. The history of mapping has been open to this approach for some time, and other disciplines — such as history, art history, literary studies, and philosophy — have also discovered maps as a part of the written, pictorial, and performative practices in history.⁵ In this context, maps have not only been referred to as ‘media’ but explicitly examined in their function as media. From the more general perspective of media philosophy and media studies, they have been analysed as hybrid forms and transformers of spatial knowledge, which render the nonvisible visible.⁶ They have also been explored from a more historical approach as a medially generated contemporary aggregate of meaning, as well

² Cf. *The History of Cartography* 1.3, 281–501.

³ Cf. Marksches, *Atlas der Weltbilder*.

⁴ Woodward, *The History of Cartography*, III.1, esp. Part 1.

⁵ Harley and Woodward, ‘Preface’; Harley, ‘The Map and the Development of the History of Cartography’; Edney, ‘Theory and the History of Cartography’; Krämer, *Medium, Bote, Übertragung*, pp. 298–337; cf. e.g. the anthologies: Glausner and Kiening, *Text–Bild–Karte*; Talbert and Unger, *Cartography in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*; Michalsky, Schmeider, and Engel, *Aufsicht–Ansicht–Einsicht*; Baumgärtner, Klumbies, and Sick, *Raumkonzepte*; Baumgärtner and Stercken, *Herrschaft verorten*; Günzel and Nowak, *KartenWissen*.

⁶ Krämer, *Medium, Bote, Übertragung*, pp. 298–337; Günzel and Nowak, *KartenWissen*.

as a way to disseminate and influence decisions and actions.⁷ In this context, cartographical representations are discussed as complex medial constellations at specific moments in history. Scholars have started to examine the different levels on which the maps operate, and the ways in which they interact with other traditions and their surroundings; they have begun to analyse the map's medial polymorphy, artificiality, imaginativeness, materiality, as well as the historical situations in which the maps have been used and importance has been assigned to them.⁸ Furthermore, observations on mapped timelines in modern history have given insight into 'the complex relationship between ideas and modes of representation',⁹ in fact on problems of visual chronologies listing significant moments of the past.

In this context the essay opens up a new perspective, exploring Gerhard Mercator's large world map from 1569 and analysing it as an arrangement of knowledge about time, deliberately amalgamating pictorial and written traditions and practices to create meaning. This map, of which, amazingly, only a few early copies have been passed down, is generally regarded as a pivotal work, in which new standards for projection and precision are set. It stands for the beginning of a modern and enduring cartography of the world, in a time characterized by discoveries, the rise of mathematical sciences, and the possibilities of printing.¹⁰ (Fig. 5.1) Although it is an established fact that Mercator was schooled traditionally,¹¹ and although there is no doubt that tradition is needed to make innovation acceptable,¹² the map from 1569 nonetheless tends to be described as the starting point for geographical and technological changes, rather than as something produced at the end of a period, or in a time of transition. It seems as if the history of cartography has only noted one part of the

⁷ Stercken, 'Repräsentieren mit Karten als mediales Modell', pp. 96–113; Bedos-Rezak, 'Cutting Edge'; Sandl, *Medialität und Ereignis*.

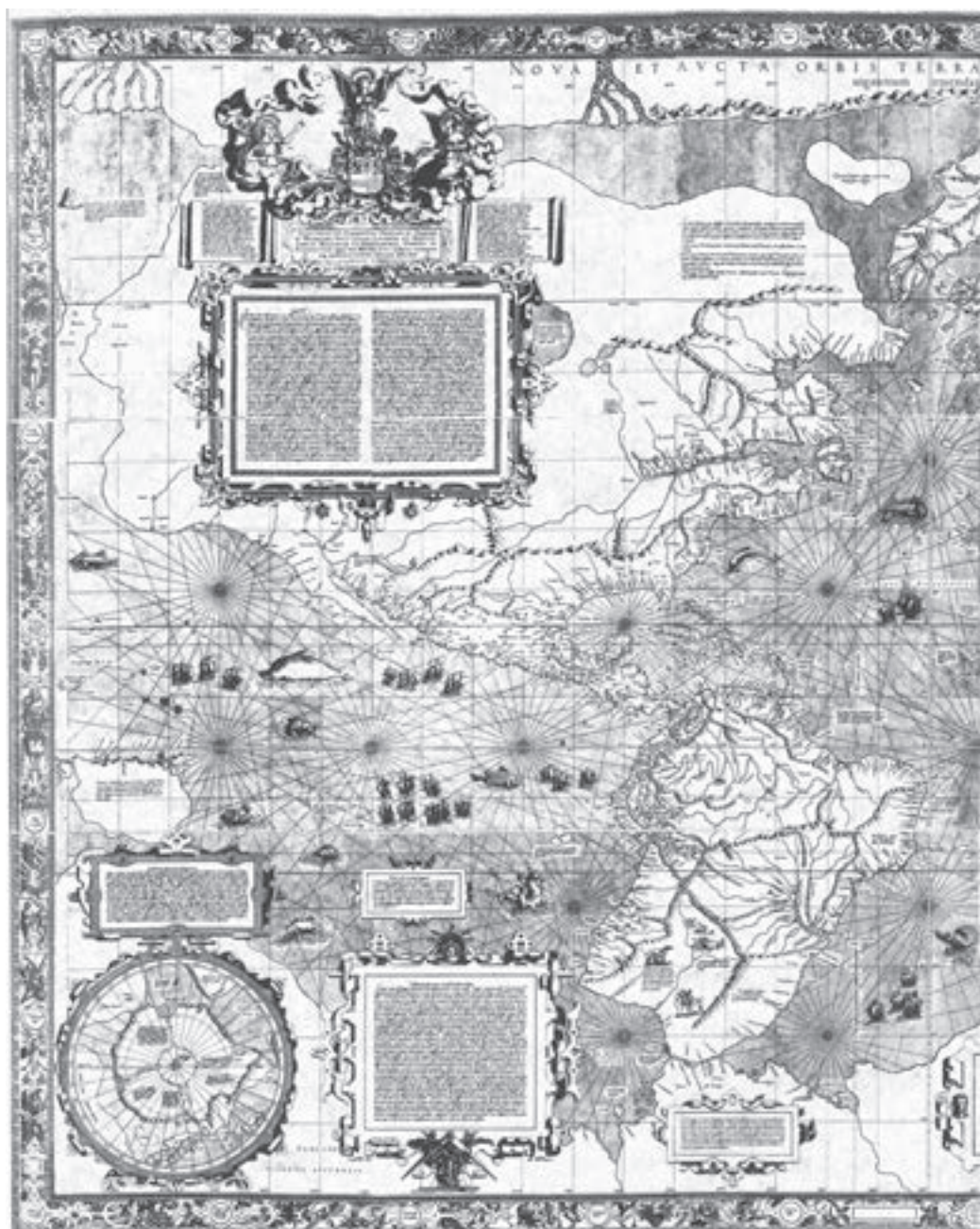
⁸ *Text–Bild–Karte*; Baumgärtner and Stercken, *Herrschaft verorten*; Stercken, 'Städte im Kartenbild'; see also the article by Anja Rathmann-Lutz in this volume.

⁹ Grafton and Rosenberg, *Cartographies of Time*, p. 23.

¹⁰ Gerhard Mercator, *Weltkarte ad usum navigantium*; Gerhard Mercator, *Weltkarte 'zum Gebrauch der Seefahrer'*; Binder and Kretschmer, 'La projection mercatorienne'; Stercken, 'Kartographie – Historiographie'.

¹¹ Mund-Dopchie, 'L'imaginaire antique'; Tromnau, 'Götzen, Mythen, Kannibalen'; von den Brincken, 'Kosmographische Betrachtungen'.

¹² Grafton, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts*; Englisch, '...navigemus contra occidentalem plagam ad insulam que dicitur terra repromissionis'; Suntrup and Veenstra, *Tradition and Innovation in an Era of Change*; Edson, *The World Map*.



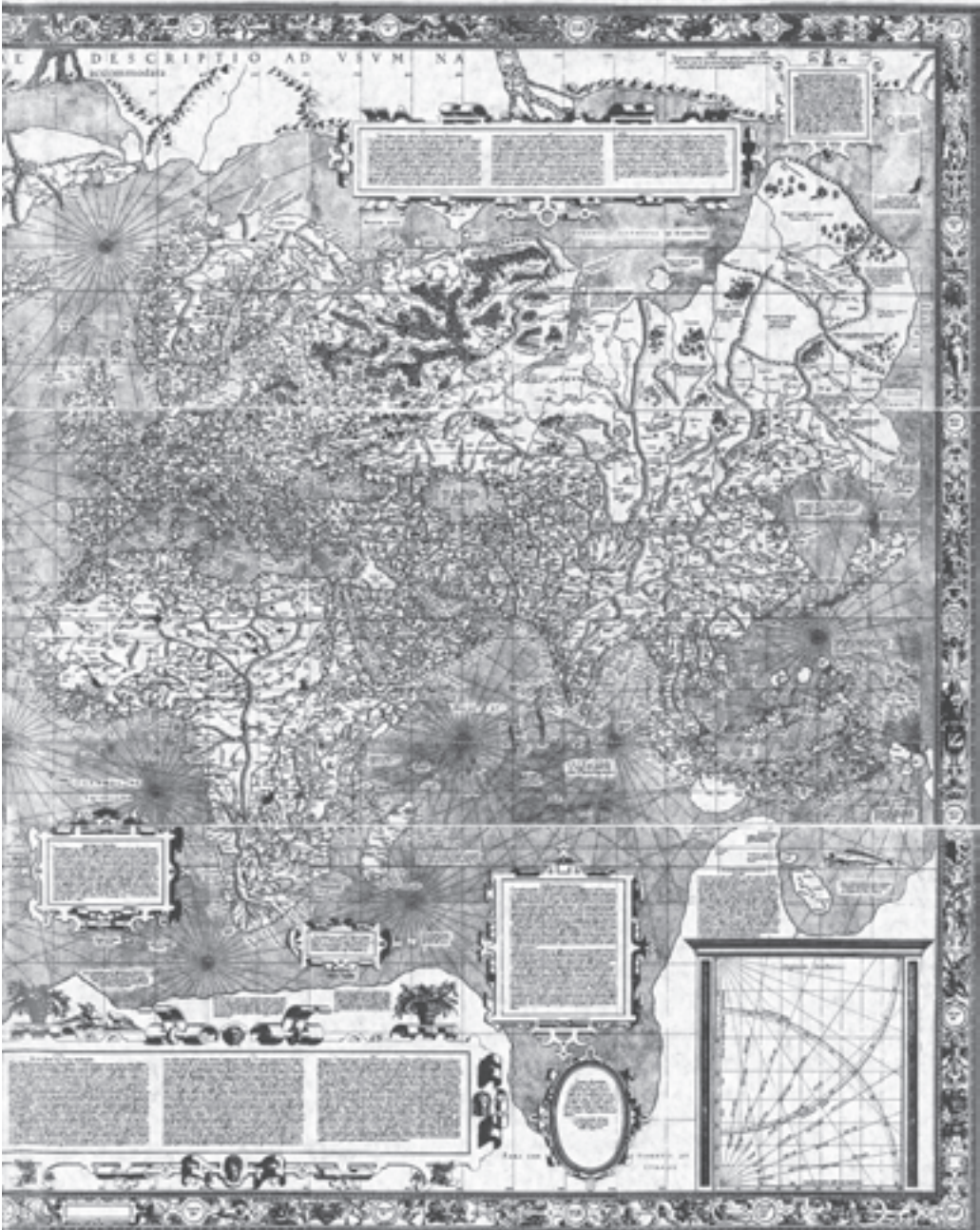


Figure 5.1. Gerhard Mercator, World Map of 1569.
Löffler and Tromnau, *Gerhard Mercator: Europa und die Welt*, pl. 1

map's self-characterization, its claim to be useful and technically innovative *ad usum nauigantium*, and that the expression *orbis terrae descriptio*, which connects Mercator's map with medieval descriptive and cartographical representations of the world, has generally been ignored.

The following observations will discuss how Mercator's novel representation of the world works as a medium of time. Whether the discussions among scholars of history mainly refer to the time-specific concepts of the past,¹³ or to social practices of conceiving time and space,¹⁴ they explore a complex artefact as a significant model for conceiving the spatial and temporal dimension of the world at the time. The argument will be put forward that even the trend-setting world map of 1569 oscillates between traditional medieval and more recent ways of transmitting knowledge, and to some extent persists with tried and tested combinations of time and space, and ways of embedding past, present and future. Taking into account the pictorial concepts and the texts on the map, but also reflections on the historicity of knowledge, instances of time stratification will be examined as they are inscribed in the map, and the modes of stratifying time will be investigated.

Pictorial Aspects

Mercator's world map is usually prized as the work of a 'pioneer of modern thinking',¹⁵ because it finds an outstanding and long-lasting solution for projecting the globe conformally on a two-dimensional surface. It shows an elaborate system of straightened parallels of latitudes and meridians covering the continents, including the recently discovered landmasses of America, and at first sight does not remind one of medieval efforts to conceive the world. But Mercator himself also insists on his professional standing and stresses the modernity of the new notion of the world by inserting little texts into the map, explaining the principles of the new projection and its advantages. The instruction for the reader, 'Inspectori Salutem', for instance, points out how up-to-date the map is, emphasizing the fact that it makes it possible to estimate directions and distances much better, and drawing a line between the old cartography according to ancient geographers and the new notion of three separate continents. Other inserts highlight the actual technical progress of

¹³ Goetz, 'Vergangenheitsbegriff'.

¹⁴ Landwehr, 'Von der "Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen".'

¹⁵ Cf. Hantsche, *Mercator: Ein Wegbereiter neuzeitlichen Denkens*.



Figure 5.2.
Albrecht von Bonstetten,
Map of the (Swiss) Con-
federacy 1479/1480. Paris,
Bibliothèque nationale de
France, MS Lat. 5656, fol. 8.

map-making, considering the projection as a reflection of the true order of the world and confronting the map-reader with ideas about how distances can be measured: for example, ‘*Distantiae locorum mensurandae modus, Brevis usus Organi Directorii*’.

If it is not approached as a technical breakthrough in cartography, but from the medieval perspective, Mercator’s world map reveals other aspects of temporality. First of all, it appears as an image and as a compilation of pictorial and written elements, which can be described not only as a complement to contemporary landscape painting,¹⁶ but also as a complex artefact, in the tradition of medieval world maps. Like the *mappae mundi*, especially those from the thirteenth century onwards, the map is framed and conceived as the image of a closed world. Following an older tradition, the border of Mercator’s world map is occupied by the winds indicating the points of the compass. But the layout of the map too, its construction as well as the pictorial and written elements filling the empty spaces and edges, also refer to older modes of cartographical representation. Here it is possible to discern the trace of a concept of time which apparently goes back to the *mappae mundi* tradition.

¹⁶ Michalsky, ‘Land und Landschaft’.



Figure 5.3. Hartmann Schedel, World Map 1493. Hartmann Schedel, *Nuremberg Chronicle*, German version, fol. 12^v/13^r. Cf. Hartmann Schedel. *Weltchronik – 1493: Kolorierte Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by Stephan Füßel (Cologne: Taschen, 2013).

This can be observed if we look at the centre of Mercator's map. From a geometrical point of view the centre is formed by the intersection of the zero meridian (in the middle of the Atlantic) and the Tropic of Cancer, a natural perception at that time as has been pointed out recently.¹⁷ However, from a visual point of view it is Europe that attracts attention; it is positioned in the visual middle of the map and takes the place occupied by Jerusalem in the late medieval world maps. Whether this can be interpreted as a shift to a new humanist, Europe-centred view, has yet to be discussed in detail. What can be observed so far is that Europe had become an aspect of cultural identity, particularly since the late Middle Ages, and had increasingly come to be understood as a political entity from the sixteenth century onwards.¹⁸ At the same time it can be shown that the Jerusalem-centred vision of the world, with its

¹⁷ Holenstein, 'Natürliche Grenzen des kulturellen Pluralismus'.

¹⁸ Oschema, *Bilder von Europa*, pp. 432–443; Schulze, 'Europa in der Frühen Neuzeit', pp. 42–50.

eschatological and political significance, was a cartographic pattern for creating meaning that persisted for some time beyond the Middle Ages. This becomes clear if we look at maps from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which generate new and meaningful interpretations by using the *mappa mundi* pattern to underpin their cartographical representations.

A good example of this is the first schematic map of the Swiss Confederacy, designed in 1479/1480 by Albrecht von Bonstetten, a monk in the monastery of Einsiedeln (Fig. 5.2). This cartographical representation conceives the confederacy as a *mappa mundi*. The eight towns and valleys of the young political system are showcased as a globe with the mountain Rigi at its centre.¹⁹ No doubt Bonstetten's aim in transferring the medieval pattern of amalgamating geographical space and salvation history to the confederacy was to assign historical and salvific importance to this new political entity. In the world map accompanying his chronicle from 1493, Hartmann Schedel puts the medieval pattern of conceiving the world to a different use (Fig. 5.3). His map combines Ptolemaic conventions of cartographical representation with strategies from medieval world maps, positioning Jerusalem in the middle of a grid-based representation of the known world. Like the medieval *mappae mundi*, this map also shows the sons of Noah (Ham, Shem, and Japheth, depicted here at the edge of the map) as a reference to the history of the world's colonization. But the pictorial model referencing salvation history can still be observed in the detailed and technically advanced maps of political entities created in the sixteenth century. A 1566 map of the territory of Zurich by the Zurich citizen Jos Murer makes this clear. In a broad frame, Zurich is placed in the middle zone of the image, highlighting its importance. Not only does the image stress the special status of Zurich, but framed texts also emphasize its relevance as the leading town of the Confederacy and as a new reformed Jerusalem (Fig. 5.4).²⁰

The constructive analogies between Mercator's world map and the kind of maps mentioned before do not mean that Mercator assigns Europe precisely the same meaning that Jerusalem had had on the *mappae mundi* since the thirteenth century: as both a present-day site and the celestial city at the end of times. However, by using traditional techniques to direct the eye, Mercator's map also seems — to a certain extent — to convey meaning in terms of time and

¹⁹ Stercken, 'Regionale Identität im spätmittelalterlichen Europa'; Watts, 'The European Religious Worldview'.

²⁰ Stercken, 'Kartographische Repräsentation'; Stercken, 'Kartographie und Chronistik'; Melville, 'Geschichte in Graphischer Gestalt'; Serchuk, 'Cartes et Chroniques'.





Figure 5.4. Jos Murer, Map of the Zurich Dominion, 1566. Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, Kartensammlung Wak R I.

space. Here Europe is not only the cardinal point of the cartographical construction but also the pivot for a notion of the world that incorporates both the continents known in the Middle Ages and the newly discovered American continent.

Individual images attest to the medieval tradition behind the innovative world map of 1569. Until now, they have been seen as betraying the antique roots of Mercator's *imaginaire* and have been explained in the context of ethnographic reflections on encounters with strange peoples and situations.²¹ The map owes its medieval appearance both to its images of ships sailing with favourable winds, oversized fishes, and sea monsters — images Mercator shared with many contemporaries — and to its pictures of individual monuments, animals, and people. For example, cannibals killing and roasting humans are shown in the vastness of southern South America and glossed as typical of the Nova India. Another example consists of two giants, whose feet do justice to the Portuguese name of the country Patagonia. Their height is not

²¹ Mund-Dopchie, 'L'imaginaire antique'; Tromnau, 'Götzen, Mythen, Kannibalen'.



Figure 5.5. Giants on Mercator's World Map of 1569.
 Gerard Mercator's *Map of the World*, ed. by Van't Hoff and others, detail.

only displayed in comparison to the Europeans next to them but also by the explanation, which estimates them as being between 2.53 and 2.99 m tall (converting the Egyptian span mentioned) (Fig. 5.5). These cannibals and giants can be understood in terms of the contemporary discourse on strange peoples and the contemporary codes for foreignness.²² But they could also be taken as an echo of the medieval convention of placing the foreign at the edges of world maps. When Mercator fills the recently discovered South American continent with fantasies of strange people living there, he also stands in the tradition of medieval map-makers, who positioned their monsters, cannibals and giants at the edges of the African or Asian continents (Fig. 5.6).²³

How long-lasting these patterns of placement were can also be seen in other maps at the threshold between the Middle Ages and early modern period. The above-mentioned world map in the chronicle by Hartmann Schedel is an example, as is the map of the Ottoman admiral Piri Reis from 1513. Reis places a monster (a Blemmyae) on the coast of the recently discovered South America, and so refers to a cartographical element of the *mappa mundi* tradition, in a map which is otherwise mainly inspired by portolan charts.²⁴ There are also written

²² Grafton, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts*, pp. 108ff.; Hofmann, 'Über die Langsamkeit des Wandels von Weltbildern', p. 47; Schweizer, 'Amerika in Sebastian Münsters "Cosmographia"', p. 262; Kiening, *Das wilde Subjekt*, pp. 114ff.

²³ Münkler, 'Monstra und *mappa mundi*'; Kiening, *Das wilde Subjekt*, pp. 21–27; *The Hereford Map*, trans. by Westrem, pp. 40ff. no. 80, pp. 70ff. no. 142, pp. 382ff. no. 971.

²⁴ McIntosh, *The Piri Reis Map of 1513*, pp. 42–44; Fernández-Armesto, 'Maps and Exploration', fig. 30.19; Hapgood, *Die Weltkarten der alten Seefahrer*, pp. 19, 27ff.

elements positioning strange people at the borders of Mercator's world map. The line 'Ung que a nostris Gog dicitur' positioned in Mongolian territory reminds us of the intimidating end-time peoples Gog and Magog, who are sometimes represented on medieval world maps, most strikingly on the Ebstorf map. Another example of written references to strange people is the representation of the North Pole. Here a well-known notion of the colonization of the North is referred to: the Pygmies, or Skraelings, who live on the black polar rock.²⁵

Minor Forms of Historiography

Alongside the pictorial — the map's traditional conceptualization as an image —, texts and writing are also used to insert the dimension of time into the open areas of Mercator's representation of space. They not only serve to incorporate explanations of the new technological principles of his mapping into the surface of the map but also to embed historical knowledge. These captions transfer minor forms of historiography onto the map, forms which not only differ in size and shape, but also comprise various layers of time: they refer to the legitimation of the map-maker, they give insight into the history of unknown regions, and they comment on some major and more recent events relating to the exploration of the world.

Contemporary political settings are mentioned, especially the conditions which made the map and its printing possible: Mercator's dedication to the Duke of Jülich, Cleves, and Berg can be found at the top left of the map, framed lavishly under personifications of Justitia, Pax, and Pietas. The sovereign is praised panegyrically on two flanking scrolls, as an auspicious guide and the exponent of a fortunate, virtuous, and blessed dynasty. The quoted story of the 'star-maiden' Astraea, derived from Greek and Roman mythology, associates



Figure 5.6. Hereford World Map, Giants. *The Hereford Map*, trans. by Westrem, detail.

²⁵ *The Hereford Map*, trans. by Westrem, p. 32 no. 60ff.; *Die Ebstorfer Weltkarte*, ed. by Kugler, I, 15/3.

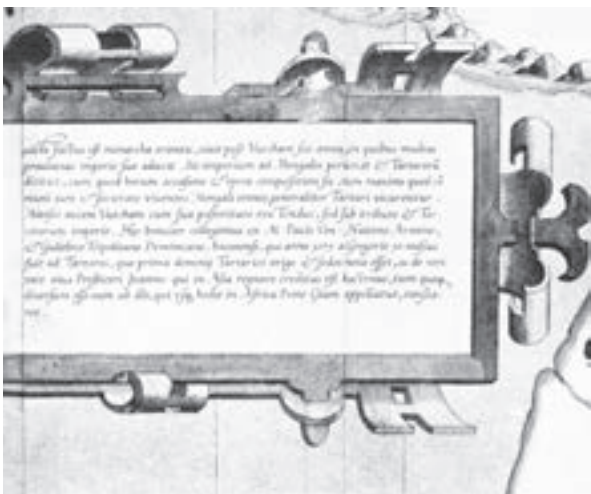


Figure 5.7. A text referring to Prester John on Mercator's World Map of 1569.
Gerard Mercator's Map of the World, ed. by Van't Hoff and others, detail.

the duke's reign with the promise of a golden age of peace and justice, overcoming crime and wickedness. At the same time, an oval cartouche close to the right bottom corner embeds the map into broader political contexts by referring to legal aspects of the printing. Here, the dual copyright of the map is recorded, granted on the one hand by the emperor (Maximilian II) for fourteen years, and on the other hand by the king (Philip II) for ten years.

Other inserts mark historical sites by commenting on events in situ, and connecting places with their history in a manner already used by the encyclopaedic world maps of the thirteenth century. The Ebstorf world map, for instance, which was designed at the end of the thirteenth century, combines pictorial elements with explanations, and at times uses demonstrative pronouns to assign importance and historicity to a place. For example, it explains the wall enclosing active cannibals by telling the well-known story of the people of Gog and Magog, immured by Alexander the Great: 'Hic inclusit Alexander duas gentes immundas Gog et Magog [...]'. Another example is a town symbol in the Asian part of the map, with the explanation that it was founded by Nimrod, after he left Babylonia, and that it became his residence: 'Hanc civitatem condidit Nemroth [...]'.²⁶

²⁶ Cf. *Die Ebstorfer Weltkarte*, ed. by Kugler, I, A1 8/7, B2 18, p. 112.



Like the medieval *mappae mundi*, the 1569 world map also combines places and minor forms of historiography,²⁷ but Mercator's ways of intertwining space with its history seem to be more elaborately and systematically conceived. The items of historiographical knowledge are not inserted with equal rankings and are differentiated by size and shape. There is, for instance, the large cartouche, framed sculpturally and placed over Asia, which seems to function as compensation for the lack of

knowledge about the local geographic situation. It tells the story of Prester John and the origin of the Tartar empire, thus fixing on the map an old and extremely popular tradition of a Christian king, a tradition that had raised hopes of freeing the Holy Land from the heretics since the time of the Crusades (Fig. 5.7).²⁸ The story goes back to the time of the First Crusade and the siege of Antioch in the year 1098. It centres on the spectacular rise of the Nestorian priest John to sovereignty over the Eastern Empire. It describes the situation of Vuth, his successor, and his strategies against the growing power of the Mongols/Tartars, who were supposed to pay tribute to him. It also recounts how the Mongolian blacksmith Chingis obtained kingship in 1187: He conquered land successfully, administered his dominions wisely, eventually became the emperor of the Tartars, and was also able to overpower the kingdom of Tenduc, making Vuth and his successors his tributaries.

Other minor forms of historiography refer to more recent events, mainly from the Middle Ages and the beginning of the early modern period. Framed less lavishly, or without any frame at all, they appear less important than the story of Prester John. However, they list more systematically historiographical events with dates, and therefore seem to reflect the growing interest in calcu-

²⁷ Studt, 'Kleine Formen' der spätmittelalterlichen Geschichtsüberlieferung'; Studt, 'Zwischen historischer Tradition und politischer Propaganda'.

²⁸ Kniefelkamp, 'Der Priesterkönig Johannes und sein Reich'; Baum, *Die Verwandlungen des Mythos vom Reich*, pp. 123–99; Münkler, *Erfahrung des Fremden*, pp. 187–205.

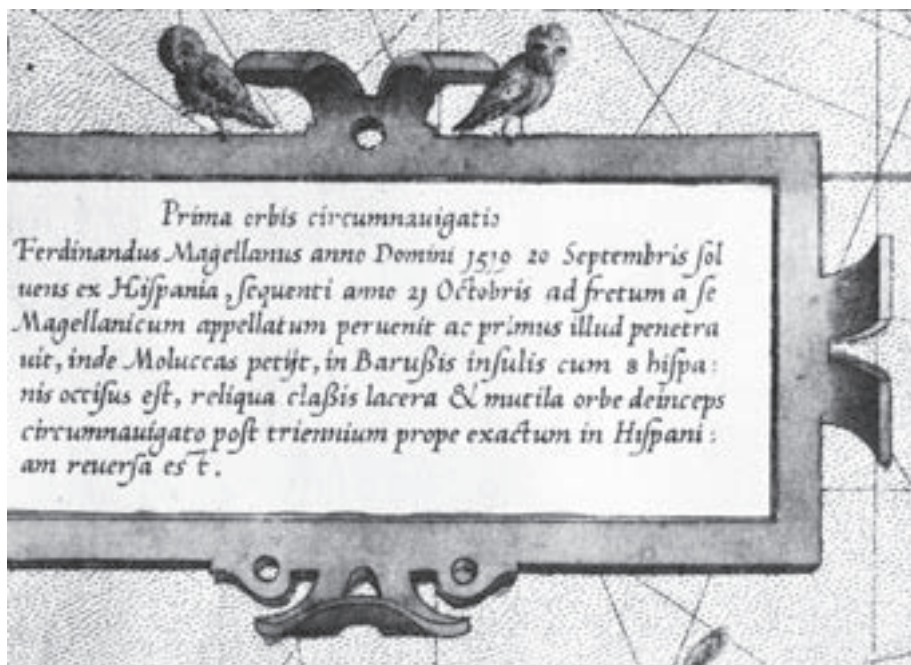


Figure 5.8: Lines referring to Magellan on Mercator's World Map of 1569.
Gerard Mercator's Map of the World, ed. by Van't Hoff and others, detail.

lation around the middle of the sixteenth century. This applies to a kind of annals of discovery — mainly that of the north of America — at the beginning of the sixteenth century, mentioning Gaspar Corte Real's expeditions in the year 1500, the British invasion of the New France coast in 1504, close to the mouth of the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, the Florentine Giovanni Verazzano's investigation of the coastal zones of New France in the name of the French king in 1524, the exploration of these areas by Jacques Cartier in 1534, and the conquest of New France for the king of France a year later. Minor forms of historiography also highlight other major discoveries such as the circumnavigation of Africa by Vasco da Gama in the year 1497, and the first circumnavigation of the world by Magellan in 1519, or important political decisions, such as Pope Alexander's division of the world between the Portuguese and the Spanish in 1493 and 1524.

In general the historiographical texts are brief, some consisting only of a short sentence such as: 'Bresilia inventa a Portugallensibus anno 1504'. Sometimes, however, the event described is integrated into a broader narrative. The



Figure 5.9: Lines referring to Columbus on Mercator's World Map of 1569.
Gerard Mercator's Map of the World, ed. by Van't Hoff and others, detail.

description of the first circumnavigation of the African continent by Vasco da Gama, for instance, contains information about da Gama's employer, the thirteenth king of Portugal, Emanuel I, and mentions the Cape of Good Hope and Calecut (in southern India) as the main destinations of the voyage. The circumnavigation of the world by Magellan is given a similar commentary, describing the starting point, the duration of the voyage to the narrows (in Tierra del Fuego), later called the 'Strait of Magellan', the deaths of the explorer and his companions on the *Barussis insulis*, and the return of the damaged armada three years after its departure (Fig. 5.8).

The written elements not only incorporate knowledge from different eras in the map but apparently value the insights bequeathed by tradition just as much as more recent practical knowledge. They also allow an insight into the ranking of the importance of events at a particular moment in historical time. This is made clear by the unframed inscription related to the discovery of the 'New India' by Columbus, which is placed close to Haiti (Fig. 5.9). It is striking that this discovery is as inconspicuous on the map as individual remarks on the history of the priest-king John and his Christian empire in the Asian region of the map: the reference, for instance, to the country of *Naiman*, the home of the *Naiman* people, where Prester John rose to power, or to the history of the kingdom of *Tenduc*. Of course, the low estimation of Columbus's discovery changed quickly, as is already apparent in the *Orbis Terrae Compendiosa Descriptio*, designed in 1587 by Gerhard Mercator's son Rumold on the basis of the world map of 1569. Rumold's map highlights the discovery by moving the sentence 'America sive India Nova. Anno Domini 1492 a Christophoro Columbo nomine Regis Castellae primum detecta' from the coastal area to the unexplored interior, spreading it in big letters over the wide expanses of empty land, which are thereby defined as a new continent.

Authorities

The texts on Mercator's world map of 1569 not only create a temporal dimension by embedding minor forms of historiography into a spatial representation: they also serve to insert the map-maker into a long history of knowledge and scholars. On the one hand — as was common in humanist circles of his time — Mercator self-confidently emphasizes the scientific methods of his work, indicating for instance in his *Inspectori Salutem* that he has first compared Castilian and Portuguese maps (*tabulas*), and then juxtaposed them with a large number of travel records in order to achieve the new quality of his world map. On the other hand, Mercator — like many medieval map-makers — discusses geographical knowledge with scant regard for whether it has been passed down from antiquity, the Middle Ages, or the more recent past.²⁹ He refers explicitly to antique scholars like Plato, Ptolemy, Pomponius Mela, Pliny, Solinus, Herodotus, Strabo or Arrian, but also to medieval writers like Marco Polo, William of Tripoli, Haiton of Corycus, Gerald of Wales, John Mandeville, or the contemporary Portuguese historian John (João) de Barros.

However, the way Mercator deals with his authorities and with the historicity of their knowledge is ambivalent. He apparently keeps to the tradition he quotes, especially in the case of Ptolemy, whose work is a main reference for his own work and whose authority is also upheld against the opinions of modern geographers, for example, in the text *Inspectori S(alutem)* or *De vero Gangis et Aureae Chersonesi situ*. In cases where better geographical knowledge is at hand, however, he deals critically with the antique tradition: the instructions for the map's reader, for instance, record that Pliny has failed to describe the situation around the Gulf of Finland. In these moments of historicizing older observations, Mercator is in line with the map-makers who tried to implement new knowledge of foreign lands in cartographical representations — a new attitude which can particularly be observed after the adoption of Ptolemy's *Geography* in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, for instance, in the 1459 world map by the Venetian monk Fra Mauro.³⁰

Medieval authorities, quoted mainly for their knowledge about the edges of the world, seem to be less doubted. This applies to the Venetian Marco Polo, one of Mercator's important sources for Asia, as well as for the Armenian

²⁹ Cf. *Die Ebstorfer Weltkarte*, ed. by Kugler, I, 43–60; *The Hereford Map*, trans. by Westrem, pp. xxvii–xxxvii; Falchetta, *Fra Mauro's World Map*, pp. 52–70.

³⁰ Falchetta, *Fra Mauro's World Map*, pl. 10, l. 6, pl. 34, f. 20, pl. 40, S 5, c 30; Baumgärtner, 'Weltbild und Empirie'.



Figure 5.10. The North-Pole Map on Mercator's World Map of 1569.
Gerard Mercator's Map of the World, ed. by Van't Hoff and others, detail.

Haiton of Corycus and William of Tripoli, a Dominican from Ancona. These are all referenced by Mercator in his comments on Prester John.³¹ Discussing their observations, Mercator states that the truth had already been searched for in the late thirteenth century, under papal orders, and that the continued existence of John's empire in these times had been challenged. At the same time Mercator takes a position in the discussion about the relocation of the Prester John narrative from Asia to Africa, asserting that the priest-king is a different person from a certain *Prete Giam*, whom he positions west of the Nile between Nubia and Abyssinia on his world map.³² A similar approach to authoritative tradition and critical reflection can be found in Mercator's comment on John Mandeville, who — along with Marco Polo — is quoted as a source for the area between the Indian and the Pacific Oceans. Mercator notes that Mandeville has a weakness for legends, but at the same time states that the report of his travels is absolutely reliable when it comes to geographical localization.

Other texts on Mercator's world map emphasize the continuing currency of medieval knowledge, especially for *terrae incognitae*. His belief in medieval authorities becomes particularly apparent in the *descriptio* of the North Pole, framed and combined with a round map of the pole (Fig. 5.10).³³ This text, about a region much discussed in Mercator's time, refers to the itinerary of Jakob Knoyen of Brabant, a perplexing source going back to the so-called *Inventio Fortunata*, a lost older description of the polar region.³⁴ Jakob Knoyen, Mercator tells us, relied on the report of a priest in service of the Norwegian king in 1364. The priest, a descendant of those who had been placed on the islands of the North by King Arthur, had in 1360 met a Minorite friar and mathematician from Oxford, who had not only visited the islands but had also travelled in more remote regions and surveyed them. Mercator sees Knoyen's report on the whirlpool of the North — dangerous, and fed by four arms of the sea — as confirmed by the description of Ireland by Gerald of Wales from the end of the twelfth century. And, apparently to authenticate his observations, he quotes the relevant lines from Gerald's book 'Marvels of Ireland', describing the startling, mysterious abyss, greedily swallowing ships that pass.

³¹ *Correspondance mercatorienne*, ed. by van Durme, p. 16; Reichert, 'Die Erfindung Amerikas durch die Kartographie', pp. 122ff.; Reichert, 'Columbus und Marco Polo – Asien in Amerika'.

³² Edson, *The World Map*, p. 98; Baum, *Die Verwandlungen des Mythos vom Reich*, pp. 217–38.

³³ Dreyer-Eimbcke, 'Durchs Eis ins Reich der Mitte'.

³⁴ von den Brincken, 'Kosmographische Betrachtungen', p. 517; Dreyer-Eimbcke, 'Durchs Eis ins Reich der Mitte', pp. 148–54.

The importance of Jakob Knoyen's text for Mercator also becomes clear when we look into his correspondence with other scholars of his time about a north-west passage. The report is quoted, for instance, in a letter from Mercator to John Dee in 1577.³⁵ Dee seems to have been so much convinced of its credibility that he developed claims to the north-eastern islands, which — according to Knoyen — had been colonized by King Arthur. Dee's considerations, nourished by ideas of a worldwide 'British Empire', were not purely scholarly in nature. But his proposals for the exploration and colonisation of the Far North, although they seem to have reached Queen Elizabeth I, were ultimately not successful.³⁶

Time Strata

These brief observations on Mercator's world map indicate the particular way cartographical representations convey and shape time in a period generally considered as one of major technological change. They illustrate the fact that innovation is a complex temporal phenomenon, which relies in a large part on older cultural forms of creating meaning, and which can only be discovered when the particular arrangement of knowledge and aspects of agency are taken into consideration. They make it clear that even maps which claim (and stage) technological and mathematical progress add historical dimensions to the spatial representation, and continue with older practices of merging time and space. In the presentation of these maps as framed images, conceived with written and pictorial elements, and in their handling of approved authorities, the spirit of the encyclopaedic *mappae mundi* of the thirteenth century onwards, *summae* of knowledge and visual history, lingers on.³⁷ Like these, Mercator's world map presents a closed and complex model of intertwining space and time, which treats different time levels as simultaneous, and offers a spatio-temporal solution for the still-discussed paradigm of the 'simultaneity of the non-simultaneous'.³⁸

³⁵ *Correspondance mercatorienne*, ed. by van Durme, pp. 132–40, see also p. 157 (the letter to Richard Hakluyt in the year 1580); Dreyer-Eimbcke, 'Durchs Eis ins Reich der Mitte', p. 154.

³⁶ Taylor, 'A Letter Dated 1577 from Mercator to John Dee', p. 68; Skelton, 'Mercator and English Geography', pp. 161ff.; Cherton and Watelet, 'Catalogus', p. 410 ('The history of the moste noble and worthey Kinge Arthur', fol. 1557).

³⁷ Cf. von den Brincken, 'Raum und Zeit'; Edson, *The World Map*, pp. 31, 227, 229 f.; Watelet, 'Réseau de Connaissances'; Pennemann, 'La Bibliothèque de Mercator', p. 121; Mund-Dopchie, 'L'imaginaire antique', p. 23.

³⁸ Landwehr, 'Von der "Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen"'; Czock and Rathmann-Lutz, 'ZeitenWelten'.

His spatial image conveys the promises which the new modes of projection hold for the future of seafaring; the present of the map's production is mirrored in technical explanations, in the dedication and the official legitimation of the map's authorship; and the past appears in the minor forms of historiography embedded in the map's surface.

The elements referring to time and history are deposited like sediments at various depths of the map's construction. Historical importance is generated by the pictorial composition, which still conveys traces of the old spatio-temporal order, presenting the world as an ideal entity thoroughly embedded in salvation history. This medieval understanding can be discerned both in the writing, especially in the texts concerning *terrae incognitae* and the narrative of Prester John, and, more generally, in the considerable number of historiographical inserts in the spatial representation of 1569. These not only integrate knowledge relating to Christian beliefs, and quote ancient and medieval sources, but also connect space with more recent knowledge about the history of discoveries. They incorporate narratives linked with specific dates into the map, and connect places with important events.

There is no doubt that the cartographical work of Gerhard Mercator becomes less imaginative and more clinical in the course of his life. At the same time it can be argued that older strategies of amalgamating history and space are evident not only in the world map of 1569 but also in other maps by Mercator, and that they persist — in fragmented form — in the work of his successors. Mercator's Holy Land map of 1537, for instance, contains biblical history and is encompassed by a representation of Christ. His map of Europe of 1554, which was adapted in 1573, incorporates not only small panels with historiography of various origins but also descriptions of the *Peregrinationes* of Paul, Peter, and Christ, connecting salvation history with its physical sites.³⁹ Moreover, the simplified versions of Mercator's ground-breaking world map show that the commentaries on the *terrae incognitae* in particular were reproduced by younger map-makers. Thus for example the Knoyen report and the tradition about pygmies are quoted on the representation of the North Pole on Rumold Mercator's world map of 1587. And the 1633 version of the Mercator/Hondius Atlas also contains references to the thirteenth-century accounts of travel in the country of the Mongols.⁴⁰

³⁹ Dürst, *Die Europa-Karte von Gerard Mercator, 1572*, p. 3.

⁴⁰ Averdunk and Müller-Reinhard, *Gerhard Mercator, Addendum; Mercator/Hondius-Atlas*, pp. 338ff., cf.: *Annibi Nainavorum terra Ioanni de Planocarpini*.

In this way the map of 1569 is an example of the gradual passage from the world-view of the Middle Ages to a mathematical cartography which developed slowly as a genre alongside historiography. At the same time it fits into a notion that emerged in the sixteenth century, the notion of cartography as a complement to historiography, and of maps as instruments of historical interpretation.⁴¹ Like his contemporary Abraham Ortelius, Mercator apparently thought that maps should give visual form to the sites of history and fix them in the memory. This ideal also lay behind Mercator's never-completed project of an all-embracing cosmography, which was supposed to present a mirror-like image of a world pervaded by divine wisdom. The work was intended to contain not just the history of creation, and geographical, genealogical, and political reflections, but also cartographic representations.⁴²

⁴¹ Michalsky, *Projektion und Imagination*, pp. 59–94; Thiele, 'Kosmographie als universale Wissenschaft'.

⁴² Cf. Thiele, 'Kosmographie als universale Wissenschaft'; cf. Horst, *Die Welt als Buch*, pp. 105–07; cf. the preface to *Mercator-Hondius-Atlas*, p. 23; Vermij, 'Gerard Mercator and the Science of Chronology', p. 189; Averdunk and Müller-Reinhard, *Gerhard Mercator*, pp. 63–65.

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VIDE INFRA [...] VIDE SUPRA: FLIPPING THROUGH TIMES IN THE *RUDIMENTUM NOVITIORUM* (1475)

Anja Rathmann-Lutz

Time Mediated and Mediating Time

Leafing through the *Rudimentum Novitiorum*, a compendium of world history and cosmography for ‘young students’, readers are guided through multiple forms of time and temporality.¹ Users of the book are animated to retrace the movements in and of the text by using it together with picture-diagrams in a hypertextual way — jumping forwards and backwards, accelerating one age, slowing down and contemplating another. That kind of usage could be achieved by bringing together more traditional and approved treatments of time in historiography with the new capabilities of the printing press, combining the text with paratextual elements like graphics, subtitles, lists, and registers.²

When dealing with historiography, it is particularly visible that the mediality of time and the temporality of media are mutually dependent. Indeed, historiography seems to be *the* medium of time par excellence. This is espe-

* This essay owes much to Livia Cardenas, who pointed me to the *Rudimentum Novitiorum* and provided many interesting hints on the relation of form and function therein, as well as to the comments of Anna Becker and Eva Brugger.

¹ All references in this article are to the exemplar in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 2 Inc. c.a. 408m. See also Weimar, Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek, Inc 47.

² These elements contribute to the hypertextual mode of reading before and beyond the historiographical text. Cf. Genette, *Paratexts*.

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Temporality and Mediality in Late Medieval and Early Modern Culture, ed. by Christian Kiening and Martina Stercken, CURSOR 32 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), pp. 177–196

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cially valid for the universal chronicle of the high and later Middle Ages, with its putative linear chronological arrangement of six ages, dealing with time on earth and its decay crowned by an end leading to eternity. Looking closer however, it becomes clear that historiography deals not with one linear and successive time but with manifold temporalities: past, present, and future are layered, slowly narrated episodes alternate with rushed ones, continuities and breaks are likewise exposed. There is no 'natural order' which can be easily grasped or solved: they interfere with and build on each other, both thwarting and energizing. These temporalities are on display in annals and chronicles. The movement of time is used to mediate change as well as to construct and assess historical events, breaks, and developments. As Aleksandra Prica and Benno Wirz put it in their introduction to *Wiederkehr und Verheissung*, 'Zeit [muss] als Vermitteltes in den Blick genommen werden, um theoretisch überhaupt greifbar zu werden' (time has to be seen as something mediated, in order to be theoretically understood).³ Moreover, in historiography time is 'mediating' too, for temporality is part of the 'mediale Verfasstheit' (medial constitution) of historiography and at the same time its main theme. The following reading of the *Rudimentum Novitiorum* will discuss the implications of these notions.

Compiling and Composing: The Making of the Rudimentum Novitiorum

The *Rudimentum Novitiorum* (Elementary Book, or Handbook for Beginners) was published in Lübeck in 1475 by the printer Lucas Brandis as a universal chronicle stretching from the creation of the world to 1473.⁴ It was enriched with texts covering moral and theological issues, short biographies of ancient philosophers, as well as the martyrologue of Usuard and the description of the Holy Land of Burchard of Monte Sion — both printed here for the first time. Its learned author is anonymous, presumably a cleric, maybe a teacher in one of the mendicant communities in Lübeck. There are strong links to Dominican historiography as well as to the cathedral chapter.⁵ The text must have been

³ Prica and Wirz, 'Medialität und Zeitlichkeit'.

⁴ There is little research on the *Rudimentum Novitiorum*. For basic information cf. Schwarz, *Über den Verfasser und die Quellen des 'Rudimentum novitiorum'*; Kohfeldt, 'Zur Druckgeschichte des Lübecker *Rudimentum Novitiorum*'; Kugler, '*Rudimentum Noviciorum*'; Worm, '*Rudimentum Novitiorum*'.

⁵ Potthast, *Bibliotheca Historica Medii Aevi*, p. 986 argues in favour of the Franciscans, without offering any further justification; for the links to the Dominicans and the cathedral

written some time before the print appeared and does not transgress the contents of other well-known late medieval universal chronicles.⁶ Only a few years after its appearance in Latin it was translated into French. Entitled *La Mer des Hystoires* (Paris: Pierre Le Rouge, 1488/89; Lyon: Jean de Pré, 1491), its success surpassed the original Latin version. Its decoration was even more lavish and the focus had expanded to include French royal history as well.⁷

First and foremost, following the example of its medieval predecessors, the *Rudimentum Novitiorum* was designed to instruct future clerics. Nevertheless, the author also extended its potential usefulness to laymen, who could profit from 'a whole library' condensed in one work — a claim earlier compilations also made.⁸ The author almost consistently referred to his sources to encourage further studies. A planned second edition with reductions in layout and text to be affordable for the *pauperes* (poor people) never made it to the press, though there are some sample prints.⁹ An initial success must be seen in the more than sixty surviving exemplars on paper as well as on vellum and also in manuscript copies.¹⁰ But it was not as successful as Werner Rolevinck's *Flores Temporum*¹¹ or the *Mer des hystoires*. That might have to do with its demanding structure

chapter Schwarz, *Über den Verfasser und die Quellen des 'Rudimentum novitiorum'*, pp. 16ff.; Worm, *'Rudimentum Novitiorum'*, p. 1304. These arguments are based on the overall structure of the work as well as on the author's preference for dogmatic topics like the immaculate conception and papal history. Some scholars have also speculated that Lucas Brandis may have been the author of the compilation. Cf. Kohfeldt, 'Zur Druckgeschichte des Lübecker *Rudimentum Novitiorum*'.

⁶ For its sources see below, pp. 182, 184.

⁷ Wright, 'La Mer Des Hystoires, Paris, 1488'.

⁸ Cf. the author's suggestions on fol. 13^r–14^v (prologue) and fol. 471 (colophon). That Lucas Brandis tried to reach a broader audience for his product is confirmed by a special advertisement he produced also in 1475. An entire page is dedicated to the praise of the *Rudimentum*, its contents and layout. Cf. Kazmeier, 'Eine bisher unbekannte Buchhändleranzeige'. For earlier schoolbooks claiming to condense knowledge into one single book, cf. Melville, 'Geschichte in Graphischer Gestalt', p. 68.

⁹ Kazmeier, 'Eine bisher unbekannte Buchhändleranzeige', p. 297.

¹⁰ See, for example, Wunderle, *Katalog*, pp. 92–95, for chart. A 157. For the extant exemplars, see 'Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke' <<http://www.gesamtkatalogderwiegendrucke.de>>; 'Incunabla Short Title Catalogue', <<http://istc.bl.uk>>; and 'Incunabelkatalog INKA' <<http://www.inka.uni-tuebingen.de>> [all accessed 10 October 2017]. Cf. also Schramm and Möller, *Die Drucker in Lübeck*, p. 8.

¹¹ Colberg, 'Rolevinck, Werner'.

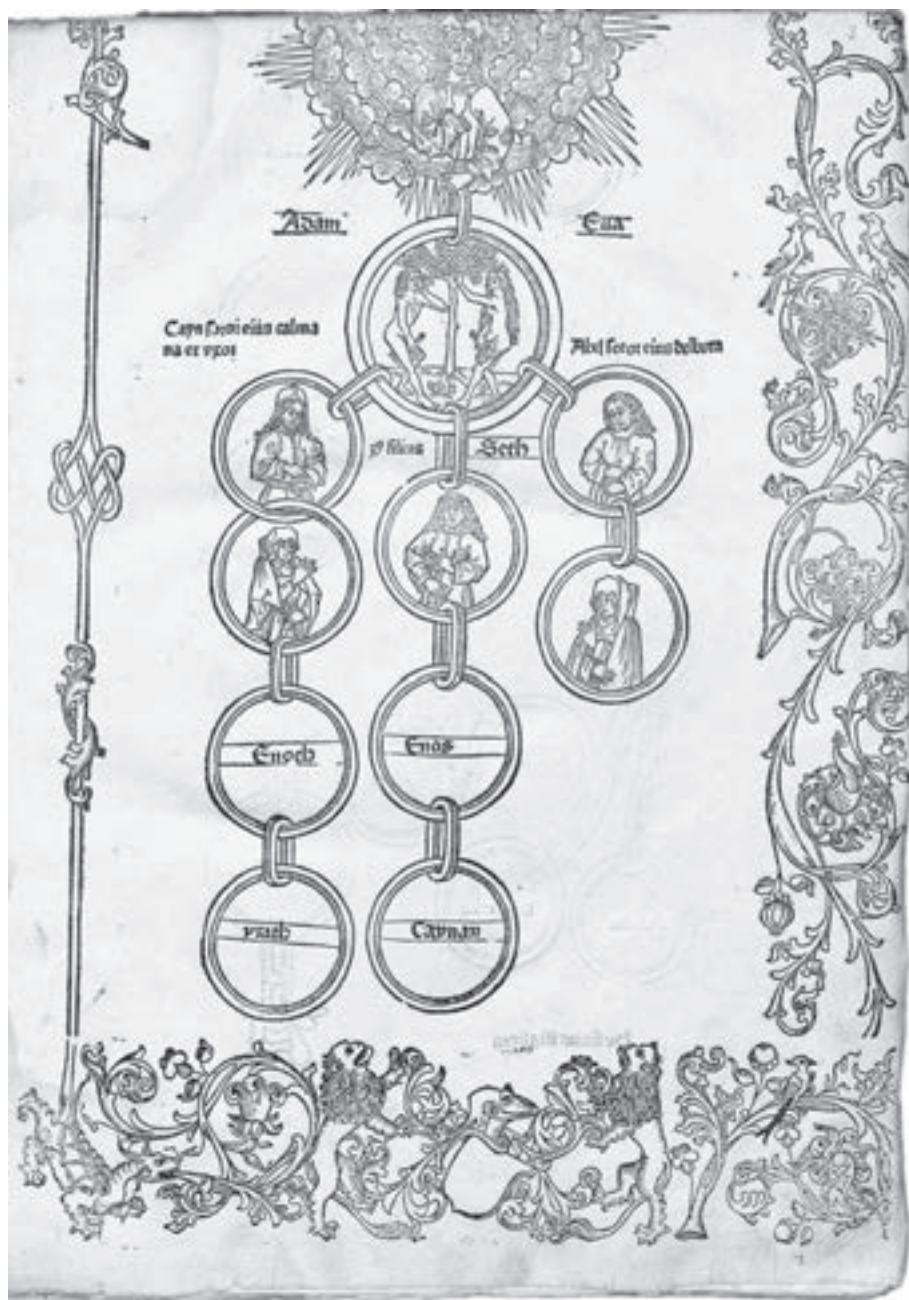


Figure 6.1. Chain 'A', Adam and Eve. *Rudimentum Novitiorum* (Lübeck: Lucas Brandis, 1475), fol. 3r. © Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich.

and layout failing to fit the needs of the intended audience. At the same time certain features make the *Rudimentum Novitiorum* rather special.

In contrast to most of the other late medieval universal chronicles the *Rudimentum Novitiorum* is furnished with many illustrations and genealogical charts. In that respect and as far as ornamentation and extent are concerned the *Rudimentum Novitiorum* is comparable to *Schedel's World Chronicle*, which appeared nearly twenty years later in Nuremberg.¹² Seventeen genealogical tables for biblical and ancient rulers as well as thirty tables with parallel lines of popes, emperors, and scholars, inserted in the text, provide chronological as well as synoptical orientation. Moreover, there are historicized initials and woodcuts with vignettes showing foundations of cities, council meetings, portraits, or figures of ancient philosophers and medieval scholars; some of them are inserted in the genealogical charts, like the Ark on fol. 49^v.¹³

With its genealogical charts the *Rudimentum Novitiorum* has much in common with earlier 'histories in graphic shape',¹⁴ yet, it has not been studied in detail. Demonstrating meagre interest in the work in its entirety, existing research has concentrated on the two maps printed as antecedents to digressions in the second and third age respectively: the *mappamundi*, the first detailed map that was printed¹⁵ on fol. 85^v/86^r, and the map of Palestine on fol. 173^v/174^r. The world map refers directly to its high and late medieval predecessors and leaves aside all information from Ptolemaic sources or more recent portulan charts or travel accounts.¹⁶ It is followed by a description of the continents mainly based on Isidore of Seville, Jacques de Vitry, and especially on the *De proprietatibus rerum* of the Franciscan Bartholomaeus Anglicus.¹⁷

¹² Worm, 'Rudimentum Novitiorum', p. 1304; Brincken, 'Universalkartographie'; Melville, 'Geschichte in Graphischer Gestalt'.

¹³ According to Kristeller, the woodcuts have to be perceived as masterpieces from a Dutch master. Kristeller, *Kupferstich und Holzschnitt in vier Jahrhunderten*, pp. 50–51.

¹⁴ Melville, 'Geschichte in Graphischer Gestalt', p. 82 only has a short note on the *Rudimentum Novitiorum* in connection with Werner Rolevinck and Hartmann Schedel.

¹⁵ Cf. Brown, *The World Image*, p. 1; Brincken, 'Universalkartographie'.

¹⁶ See also the essay by Martina Stercken in this volume for 'mediating time' in early modern maps.

¹⁷ On folio 85^r a small caption refers to the following map: 'Sequitur figura orbis trip[ar]titi / cum suis descriptiōibus' (It follows the image of the world in [its] three parts, with its descriptions). Cf. Brincken, 'Universalkartographie', p. 269.

Following the map of the Holy Land, we find the *editio princeps* of the long version of the *Descriptio Terrae Sanctae* of Burchard of Monte Sion.¹⁸

A complete edition of the *Rudimentum Novitiorum* consists of 475 folios. It starts with ten folios conveying the temporal structure of the work in a visual manner, the usual division in six ages running from the creation of the world to the birth of Christ: Beginning with Adam and Eve as the first couple of the *prima etas* in a round chain link and running through the next five ages with their main protagonists up to the birth of Christ, they show the links between the lines with the help of heavy chains combined with small historical scenes or emblematic signs within the chain links, lockets, or in the margins (Figs 6.1, 6.2).¹⁹ Most of them reoccur later within the chronicle at their respective 'chronologically appropriate' place. Preceding the prologue at the end of the genealogical charts nine scenes from the life of Christ conclude the prelude, linking the sending out of the apostles with the beginning of the story. According to Ursula Altmann, the tables in front are essential to the usage of the charts afterwards and to gaining a general overview.²⁰ The layout of the *catenae* with lines running from top to bottom alongside a main chain, marked with the letter *A*, is consistent through the first five ages. They are found throughout, but agglomerate in the fifth age.²¹ With the sixth age the genealogically conceived chains transform into three parallel lines of successive emperors, popes and *doctores*.²²

The text of the chronicle is fairly conventional in an annalistic style, orientated on the reigns of the respective rulers, interrupted by digressions on dogmatic or geographical issues. It is based, among other narratives, on the *Historia Scholastica* and was only supplemented with the deeds of the emperors, popes and *doctores* after the first concept.²³ Aside from the Bible and the church fathers, there are many other sources to which the author refers more

¹⁸ Baumgärtner, 'Reiseberichte, Karten und Diagramme'; Bartlett, 'Burchard's *Descriptio Terrae Sanctae*'.

¹⁹ Very close in layout and content are two versions of the continuation of the chronicle of Petrus Pictavensis by Johannes de Utino combining the lines on one page with the two-column text on the facing page (Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August-Bibliothek, Ms 1.6.5. Aug. fol., s. XV, and Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, clm721, s. XV; Ulrich Onsorg). Cf. Melville, 'Geschichte in Graphischer Gestalt', pp. 76–78.

²⁰ Altmann, *Die Leistungen der Drucker mit Namen Brandis*, p. 47.

²¹ Schwarz, *Über den Verfasser und die Quellen des 'Rudimentum novitiorum'*, p. 7.

²² The general idea of the parallel lines refers to the chronicles of Martin of Opava; cf. Brincken, 'Zu Herkunft und Gestalt der Martins-Chroniken', p. 729.

²³ Brincken, 'Universalkartographie', p. 269.

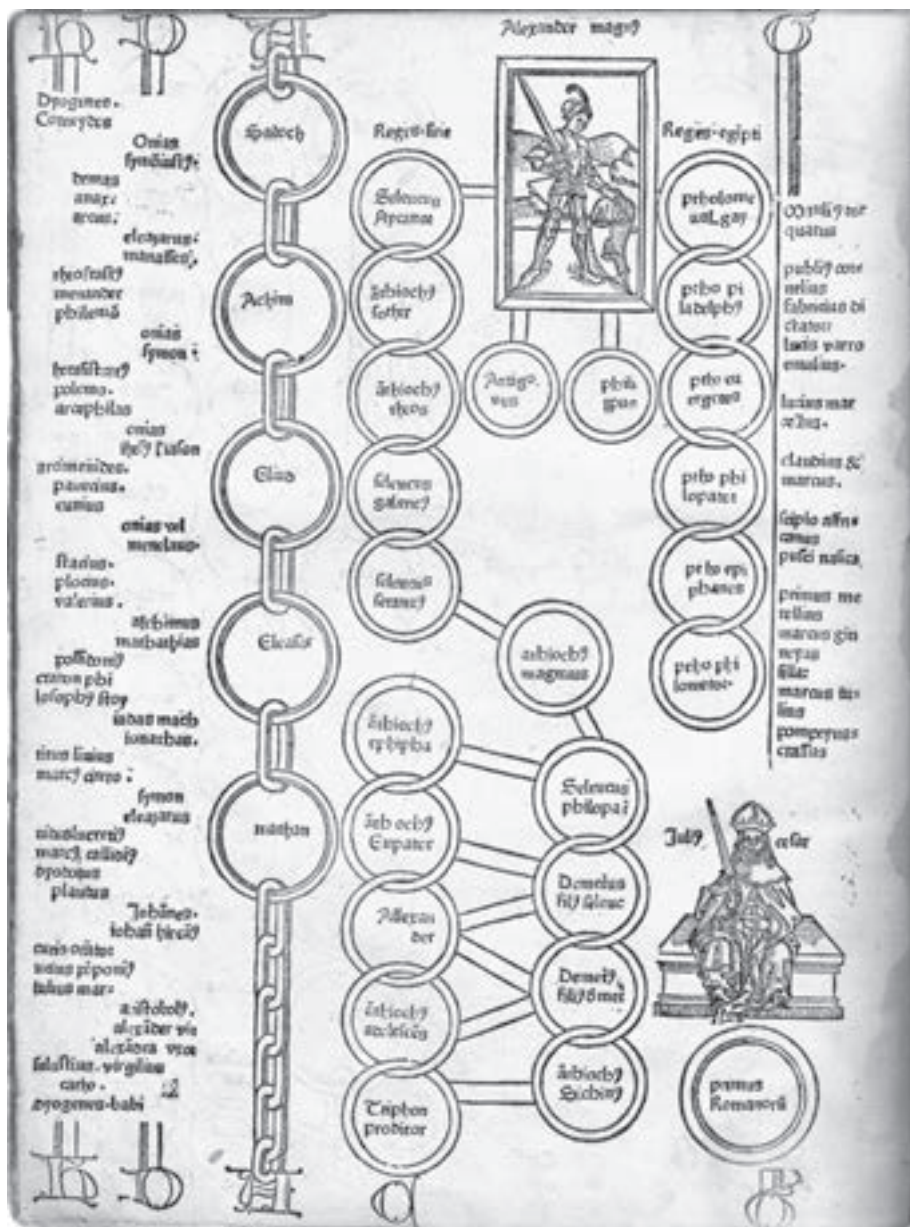


Figure 6.2. Chains ‘H’, ‘D’, ‘A’, ‘G’, with branch lines and emblems for ‘Alexander magn[us]’ and ‘Juli[us] cesar.’ *Rudimentum Novitiorum* (Lübeck: Lucas Brandis, 1475), fol. 11^v.

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or less explicitly in his text. He cites, for instance, the *Compendium* of Peter of Poitiers and the works of Vincent of Beauvais, Martin of Opava, and Henry of Herford. For information on northern Germany in the sixth age, he relied on the *Chronicon Slavicum* and the *Chronicon episcoporum Lubecensium*.²⁴ Some longer texts are inserted as excursuses: thirty of Aesop's Fables, the description of the world,²⁵ the *Descriptio terrae sanctae* of Burchard of Monte Sion, and the *Martyrologue* of Usuard just before the alphabetical index which contains minimal information on each registered topic and lends the work an encyclopaedic character.

The index items also refer to the folio number, so one of the first things to be done by a reader eager to use the book properly would be the foliation. This takes time and involves the user in a special way — as a result, not every extant exemplar has contemporary foliation. The captions, marked by blue or red coloured initials, the initial strokes and paragraph signs, either signal the topic, the chapter number, a specific *linea*, or the time frame of the following section, thus providing visual guidance throughout the book. Those might have been supplemented in the process of reading by notes, amendments, and visual hints like hands with fingers pointing in the margins.²⁶ While the numerous woodcuts function as markers to some important events or persons, they do not help to distinguish between different temporal layers — in contrast, by employing templates to represent cities, popes, emperors, kings, and scholars, scattered randomly through all ages, these persons and events attain a rather uniform appearance.

At first sight the intriguing speculation about the *Rudimentum Novitiorum* is the — purported — tension between the 'conservative' text and maps of the universal chronicle on the one hand and the 'innovative' graphic and layout design on the other hand. But the intended audience of the work, the wealthy burghers of Lübeck and their neighbours, would not have considered the knowledge transferred in it as 'overdue' but would rather have cherished its learnedness and the opportunity to be part of a growing learned community. To the printer and his audience, the combination of traditional historical

²⁴ Cf. Schwarz, *Über den Verfasser und die Quellen des 'Rudimentum novitiorum'*, pp. 28–36; Worm, *'Rudimentum Novitiorum'*, p. 1304.

²⁵ It is very common to insert this digression after the episode of the Babylonian confusion; cf. Brincken, *'Universalkartographie'*, p. 272.

²⁶ For examples of the kinds of traces left by an engaged user, see the Munich exemplar, *passim*.

and geographical knowledge and the latest technological skills would not have seemed exotic: the disposal of a new technique does not necessarily bring with it new content. The author and printer of the *Rudimentum Novitiorum* had a clear aim, and to attain it they did a good job at exploiting whatever tricks the new print medium had to offer, providing a book for the laity and the *pauperes* who were not able to afford an expansive library. This was quite a 'novel' gesture in the history of medieval historiography, though printed universal chronicles are quite new to the 1470s to begin with.²⁷

We have seen that in spite of the declaration in the proemium and the colophon, the *Rudimentum Novitiorum* is far more than an epitome. Given its complex and overwhelming structure, what is the likelihood of using and understanding it in a proper way?

Combing Through and Combining Anew: Some Possible Forms of using the Rudimentum Novitiorum

It is important to recall that we deal with very different layers of time and temporality when we consider the use of the *Rudimentum Novitiorum*: historical and biblical times on the one hand interfere with the temporalities of the text and the user on the other. That the *Rudimentum Novitiorum* presents an interface between them becomes especially evident when the inscription 'hic finitur ista linea'²⁸ ('this line ends here', Fig. 6.3) forces the 'diligens lector' ('assiduous reader', fol. 87^r) to decide whether he would follow another line or return to the text for guidance.²⁹ It is possible to start again in the past or to skip some of the lines to proceed in the far future or to keep the pace and just change to the adjacent line, following this one instead. Thus orientation within history is not provided by an 'as linear as possible' logic but by a possibly slow and seeking *performative appropriation* of the interdependencies and continuities of the *catenae*.³⁰ Although this appropriation intrinsically takes time, it is by no

²⁷ Brincken, 'Universalkartographie', p. 269ff.

²⁸ *Rudimentum Novitiorum*, fol. 227^v and in various other places.

²⁹ Early users like the scribe, who copied the printed book in 1481 in a manuscript now in Gotha, were well aware of that point. Changes to the authoritative layout of the *Rudimentum Novitiorum* were explicitly marked for its readers. Cf. Wunderle, *Katalog*, pp. 92–95.

³⁰ The overall concepts, aims, and structures of late medieval chronicles in general have been frequently studied and shall not be discussed here. See for example Berg and Goetz, *Historiographia Mediaevalis*; Guenée, 'Temps de l'histoire et temps de la mémoire au Moyen Âge'; Melville, 'System und Diachronie'; Melville, 'Spätmittelalterliche Geschichtskompendien'.

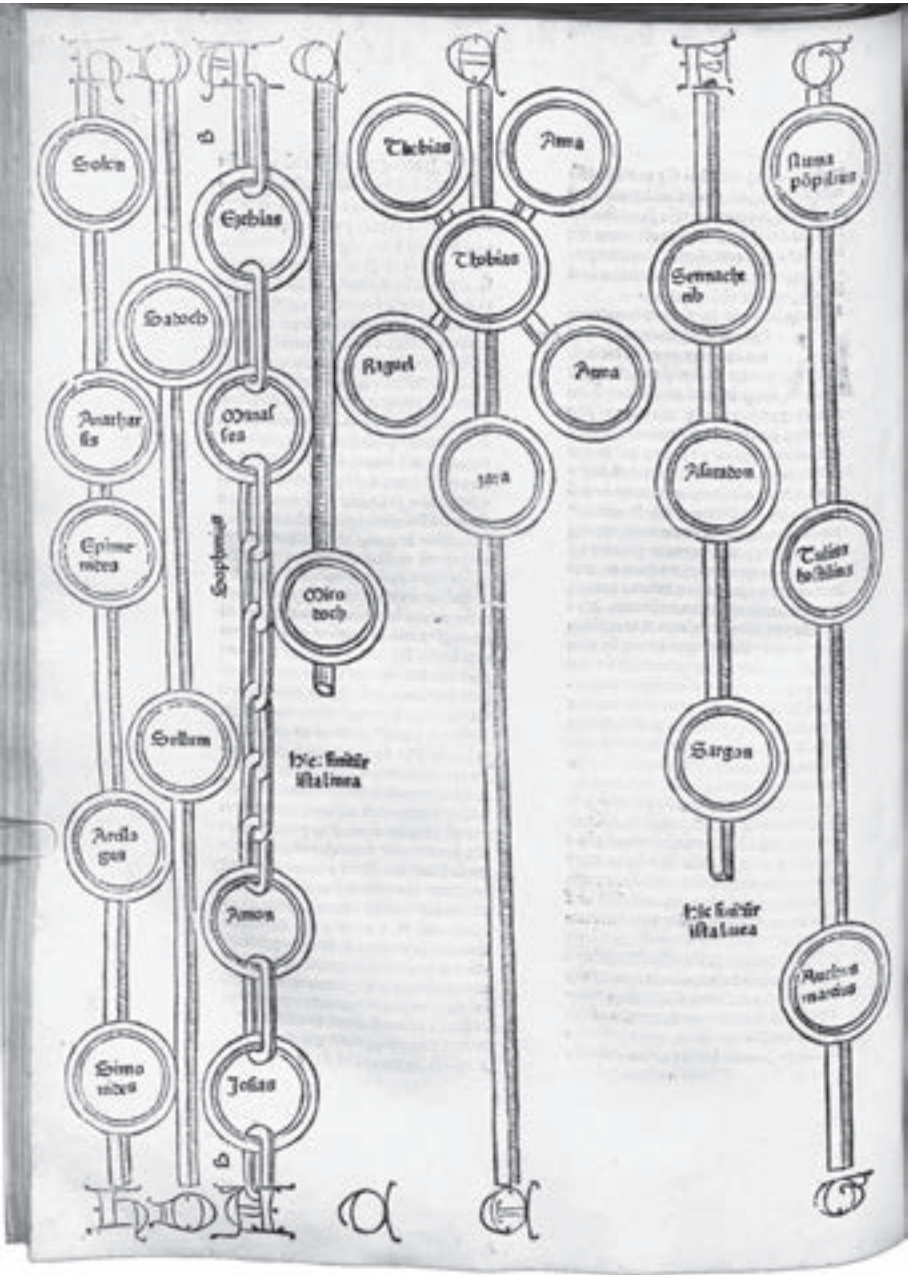


Figure 6.3. Chains 'H', 'D', 'A', 'C', 'E', 'F', 'G', with the ending of lines 'C' and 'G'. *Rudimentum Novitiorum* (Lübeck: Lucas Brandis, 1475), fol. 227" © Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich.

means linear. By leafing back and forth the plurality of the multiple timelines is reiterated and probably helps to ‘experience’ it. Therefore, the usability of the *Rudimentum Novitiorum* lies not in the ‘lucidity’ and ‘two-dimensionality’ Melville ascribed to the graphical solutions of later medieval chronicles,³¹ but in its obscurity and performed three-dimensionality.

Therefore, I would propose a discussion on the temporalities negotiated in the *Rudimentum Novitiorum* along the following key concepts: ‘linearity’, ‘contemporaneity’, and ‘cyclicity’.

Linear Chronology and its Disruptions

First of all, it seems that the author found a very traditional scheme for his chronicle, and there is no doubt that the classical division in six ages and the genealogical lines are attempts to order the course of time while being conscious of its complexity. With the *sex-aetates* structure the author provides a linear basis for the narration of world’s history: beginning with Adam in the *prima etas*, the course of time runs through the *secunda etas* with Noah, the *tercia etas* with Abraham, the *quarta etas* with Moses, and the *quinta etas* with David, up to the birth of Christ marking the begin of the *sexta etas*. At the end of the sixth age (fol. 417^v) the whole story is referred to as *decursus* from Adam up to ‘this year’ (1473). As usual the narrated time is not evenly distributed, but even though the sixth age is the most extensive, it is not that long as in other world chronicles. The schemata with the letter-marked chains to which the annalistic text often refers also conveys a linear and straight historical timeline at first glance.³²

As stated in the prologue, biblical history serves as the frame for all other histories in the *Rudimentum*: the biblical text and comments are embellished with pagan gods, demons, planets, anecdotes, and other stories from ancient empires, and thus a pre- as well as non-Christian time invades the biblical time frame. This is in part absorbed by the use of the retrospective incarnation era, which directs all events to the central event of the incarnation, again pointing to the linearity of history.³³

³¹ Melville, ‘Geschichte in Graphischer Gestalt’, pp. 63, 109.

³² Melville, ‘Geschichte in Graphischer Gestalt’.

³³ Brincken, ‘Beobachtungen zum Aufkommen der retrospektiven Inkarnationsära’, pp. 19–20. For the *Fasciculus Temporum* and the *Rudimentum Novitiorum* cf. pp. 18ff.

Then there is a conscience of ‘right order’³⁴ — not at all unusual — when after the digression on Isidore’s description of the world at fol. 116^v it reads: ‘Nunc vero ad historia[m] celer erit recur/sus sacram. ut co[n]tinuetur cathena ge/neologie sanctoru[m] patr[um] premissa: no/tulis cum suis anexis’ (Now [we] come back swiftly to the sacred history; where the genealogical chain of the holy fathers — dispatched in advance — is continued; with its notes enclosed). Interestingly the story does not follow ‘promptly’ but instead only reopens after a half column and a full blank page at fol. 118^r preceded by *cathena A* on 117^v. That chain had ended with *Phalech* on fol. 49^v, the reading *novice* now has to know how to connect to it *Reu vel Ragau*. It is only in combination with the text on the direct opposite page, stating that *Reu* is the son of *Phalech*, that this operation can be performed. The continuous flow of generations, which could be bestowed visually by connecting the lines directly and virtually independent from textual amendments, is thus disrupted by large bodies of text.³⁵ And these are not the only features that disrupt a perceived continuity. The description of the world following the world map, the description of Palestine following the map of the Holy Land and the martyrologue, breach the chronological order in a twofold manner. The first two texts (and many shorter digressions) are inserted in the chronicle text and disturb its flow, whilst also generating their own temporalities. They are geographically as well as partially alphabetically ordered and combine geographical as well as ethnographical information. But they also contain historical depth and convey the processional mode of a pilgrimage, which can be experienced by retracing descriptions on the printed maps. In addition, the mode of reading the genealogical charts may shift, as mentioned above, from a linear to a meandering perception, directing the views to the right and to the left of the *linea A* as well as abruptly back and forth. Within the text hints like ‘de quo infra dicetur’ (fol. 397^r) encourage the reader to skip some text blocks to find the section referred to. Further entanglement is achieved through references to the chains within the text (e.g., fol. 120^r) pointing to different *regni*.³⁶ However, there is no help in finding the right line to which the text refers. For example, at fol. 167^v the text states that ‘here ends the

³⁴ An awareness of things being antiquated or archaic and the conditions of the present are also visible for example on fol. 404^v.

³⁵ For the continuity of earlier visually conceived chronicles and their independence from the text, cf. Melville, ‘Geschichte in Graphischer Gestalt’, pp. 66ff., 70.

³⁶ In this case to the Egyptian one and to the one of the ‘*sicioniorum cuius primus rex agialeus*’.

chain of the third age' with David, for the referring page is 199^v. Immediately afterwards the text goes on with the *linea pontificum littera B signata* and one folio later follows *linea beniamin littera C signata*. The *linea regum latinorum* is not indicated by its letter, while on folio 169^r follows the *linea iudicium* with the corresponding letter E. The chains referred to are scattered on various folios transgressing even the *etates* (166^v, 199^v, 7^v ³⁷). The same goes for the references to fol. 227^v on fols 221^r and 228^r. However, it often occurs that the main chain and the following *capitulum* are directly linked, as for example on fol. 211^v where *linea A* starts with *Roboam* to whom refers the *capitulum de Roboam* beginning in the following folio. Also, on fol. 211^v we find some of the prophets mentioned on fol. 213^r in the lower right column. However, although the reader/user is referred to the image (*ut patet in figura*) or a *linea* he would not find all of the prophets mentioned there and he would have to find the matching lines for himself, which are in this case D and G; a reference to a specific folio number is never made. Moreover, the lines follow no general order: line A wanders and the other lines may or may not reoccur, and if so, they are seldom in the same place as before.

In consequence, on the one hand, the concatenation as a linear principle is, in spite of being interrupted by the text, clearly an aide to reading and understanding the presented timelines; on the other hand, however, it renders intelligible the unfolding of history as a discontinuous process defined by the skipping of pages as one searches for the right one, not 'reading' the book but 'working' with it and in it.

With the sixth age not only the layout of the charts changes but also the logic of the lines, emphasizing the break between the *quinta etas* and the *sexta etas*. While the overall logic of the representation highlighting continuity remains the same, the character of the orders represented changes from biblical genealogies to historical lines of 'functionaries', which contributes to an even more complicated logic of continuity and replacement with the line of the philosophers and poets. While it was previously possible to trace branch lines and to present one to eight parallels, now a strict three-line schema is imposed. And while it was imaginable that the *catenae* ended in the first five ages, now there seems to be an unbreakable continuity. An idea, which of course soon becomes volatilized again, once text and image are used together.

³⁷ This folio is additionally bound as first folio of the antecedent.

Contemporaneity

The *lineae* confer a sense of contemporaneity of emperors, popes, and *virī clarissimi*. If many popes follow each other and no emperor or scholar can be added, the lines are simply drawn through, and sometimes over, more than one page until the next possible name occurs in a locket (fol. 397^v/398^r). And in contrast to the text where the reign of the respective king or emperor is the backbone of the chronology, there is no apparent Leitfigur dominating the schemata. Many breaks and discontinuities are not rendered visible, like the transitions from the Roman and Byzantine to the Frankish emperors (fol. 374^r), where Charlemagne (d. 814) is directly in line with the byzantine emperor *co(n)stant(inus) septimus* (d. 959), or the succession of the popes in schismatic times. All three features reinforce the appearance of contemporaneity and heighten the contrast to the ages before Christ. Another procedure of rendering contemporaneity is the orientation of the reader within the book by doing the foliation and thereby turning the pages one by one in order to be able to use the index, perhaps even comparing the already foliated pages to the numbers in it. In using the index with its more than five thousand alphabetically organized *lemmata* (fols 444^v–471^r) linear time nearly falls apart, because it is alphabetically ordered and refers to events and people from all six ages on one page side by side. Therefore, it is not the contemporaneity of historic persons that is emphasized but the contemporaneity of their appearance in the book resulting from the readers' actions in appropriating them. Linear is in this case the time passing while the user is working in the book, a lapse of time wherein the reader is able to transcend the past by his present actions.

Yet another approach for the fifteenth-century reader in dealing with the *Rudimentum Novitiorum* would be to start at the beginning. She or he would in this case be looking at the first ten folios and tracking the biblical genealogies visually through the six ages. The immediately following text is the prologue and would not be of assistance in understanding the tables. Only after skimming through the book and perceiving the reoccurrences of the tables could things become a bit clearer. But as the author is obsessed — as were his contemporaries — with employing various and divergent methods of dating the historical events he recounts, it becomes evident at the beginning of every section, that there are different and sometimes contradictory methods to count and relate the course of time. The efforts undertaken to bring some order to it can be seen in these multiple dating at the beginning of each paragraph: there is the year of the reign, the age of the world, the Olympiads, biblical dates, years of the era and the incarnation year, as well as the year *ab urbe* and the year since

the translation of the Roman Empire to the Germans. Often there are hints to irregularities and inconsistencies as well as ‘emendations’ for the reigns of some Old Testament kings.³⁸ Consequently, even if a linear temporal structure is given in the sequence of the six ages, they also contain a considerable amount of chaos.

Cyclicity

With the martyrology following the pseudo-linear chronicle, time is again reshaped, now as cyclical and periodic in the form of the year in saint’s feasts. This would be added to the conception of the work and amplified on a subtler level in the reiteration of identical motifs illustrating unique events in history (e.g., foundations of cities, people’s gatherings, portraits of scholars, Fig. 6.4). By this, a momentous event is visually embedded in a circle but not necessarily in a loop claiming the repeatability of history. Only conceivable on the visual level, it embraces the user in a special way by recalling the remembrance of the already read parts, by encouraging the entanglement of different layers of time, and, last but not least, by referring to his own time through the actualization of the images in weapons, clothes, heraldry, tools — marked as ‘anachronism’ by Theodor Schwarz.³⁹ Thus, the reader is requested to locate himself in the historical lines and to transcend them at the same time. This actualization also embeds the negotiation on the relation between structure and event: the linear structure of the chronicle is perforated by the seemingly unique events, which in turn are presented in identical and therefore circular fashion through the use of the templates.

The arrangement of the diagrams and the order of the text do react to the need to position oneself in time and space as well as on the book’s printed page — therefore within history.⁴⁰ The uniformity of the schemata, designed to be used in an erratic way, can also be understood as parallelism of periods and moments in time respectively their being entangled and related to each other. The ‘new’ and ‘contemporaneous’ print medium would have contributed to that impression.

³⁸ The author sometimes explicitly mentions the shortcomings of earlier authors in this respect. De Grieck, ‘L’historiographie à Tournai’, p. 294; cf. also Schwarz, *Über den Verfasser und die Quellen des ‘Rudimentum novitiorum’*, p. 16.

³⁹ Schwarz, *Über den Verfasser und die Quellen des ‘Rudimentum novitiorum’*, p. 9.

⁴⁰ See Landwehr, ‘Über den Anachronismus’, pp. 14, 16ff.

In sum, there is no ambition to reflect the linear historiographical structure at the level of ‘temporality’. The fostering of only *one* valid order of succeeding times was not the main focus of the *Rudimentum Novitiorum*. Instead it aimed to emphasize different kinds of simultaneities: those of empires, religions, politics, and culture (*sacerdotium*, *regnum*, and *sapientia*), but also the contemporaneous complicity of the recipient. Linearity, eschatology, cyclicity, parallelism, and simultaneity are therefore all encapsulated in the *Rudimentum* and offered to the diligent student.

By cross-checking these ideas developed in an immanent lecture of the *Rudimentum Novitiorum* with a contemporaneous full page advertisement for the book (Fig. 6.5),⁴¹ the three main concepts it relies on can be confirmed. While seemingly only engaging with the content of the book, it also refers to the exact points illuminated in this chapter: the genealogies in chains, the completeness of the various stories *secundum contemporaneitate*, and the *circulum anni* of the martyrology. Thus, while the *Rudimentum Novitiorum* may seem virtually unreadable to a modern user, it was neither unusable nor useless to its contemporaries. Historical time therein is mediated by text and image while the work mediates the temporalities the user is exposed to.

⁴¹ Kazmeier, ‘Eine bisher unbekannte Buchhändleranzeige’.

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PRECARIOUS TIMES: THE DISCOURSE OF THE PROPHET IN THE AGE OF REFORMATION

Marcus Sandl

In premodernity, political turbulence, social revolutions and crises, and cultural changes were often accompanied by prophecies. They were predicted, interpreted, and placed in a broader context, generally that of salvation history (*Heilsgeschichte*). This was also the case in the age of Reformation. Even decades before Luther's rise to prominence, in fact even before his birth, a considerable proportion of contemporary publications were prophetic in origin. Astrological interpretations and apocalyptic expectations of the imminent Second Coming influenced and at times even dominated contemporary perceptions and observations of the world, and prophets appeared everywhere, warning of imminent disaster and exhorting people to repent and mend their ways. Very few of these are known by name. Most of them disappeared as quickly as they had appeared. What remained, however, and gave the age its own special character, were the prophecies.

For this kind of mutual entanglement, medieval theology coined the term *figura*. A *figura* is, as Erich Auerbach established in his extensive study, 'something real and historical which announces something else that is also real and historical'.¹ In the Augustinian tradition, for example, Noah's ark appears as a *praefiguratio ecclesiae*, or Moses as a *figura Christi*.² In the *figura*, then, promise

¹ Auerbach, 'Figura', p. 29.

² Auerbach, 'Figura', p. 38.

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and fulfilment intersect on the level of the same material and historical event, not in the sense of a causally determined process model but in the simultaneity of a figuration of anticipation and retrospection, of vertical and horizontal axes. Thus a *figura* is not simply present: it is the product of a 'figural interpretation' of two events, of which the one signifies not only itself, but also the other, which in turn incorporates and fulfils the first event.³ A *figura*, then, always appears as a dual form.⁴

When we consider the discourse of the prophet in the age of Reformation, this kind of dual figure can be discerned on two levels. The first level concerns the relationship between the late medieval prophecies and the Reformation as an event bringing radical change. The Reformation is prefigured by the prophecies and is therefore the fulfilment of a promise. This does not mean that it is causally determined by the prophecies, since fulfilment, in this context too, refers to a mutual affirmation, a representation of the one in the other, or an imaginary play of references. Fulfilment does not involve a unidirectional chronology, indeed it destroys the linearity of time and creates its own temporality. Like a transversal, it cuts through events and their interpretations, and points to the 'in between' and the precarious as the centre of the historical. Ultimately it can only be grasped in the paradoxical simultaneity of the closed or finite and the infinite: when a promise is fulfilled, historically, this closes down a realm of potentially endless concatenations of signs and imaginings.⁵

This is connected with the second level of the above-mentioned dual form: it concerns the relationship between prophecy and the prophet, and can again be interpreted as a kind of recursive doubling. The prophet who predicts the future is always also part of this future. As the originator of the prophecy, he on the one hand marks a distinction between promise and fulfilment, but on the other hand blurs this distinction by his own role as the prefiguration of what he predicts. His advent is already an aspect of the fulfilment. Through the fulfilment of the prophecy, the figure of the prophet is also fulfilled in it. The prophet thus exerts his influence at the exact place where the two fundamen-

³ Auerbach, 'Figura', p. 54.

⁴ For more on the methodological and theoretical potential, which this dual form gives to the term *figura*, and especially on its implications for media theory, cf. Kiening, 'Medialität in mediävistischer Perspektive', pp. 285–352, esp. pp. 349ff. For narratological and hermeneutic links with Auerbach's figural interpretation, cf. White, 'Auerbach's Literary History'; Frye, *The Great Code*.

⁵ For this, see also Sandl, 'Martin Luther und die Zeit der reformatorischen Erkenntnisbildung'; and Sandl, *Medialität und Ereignis*.

tally contradictory movements of prophecy — historical closure and interpretative opening — intersect. He himself is therefore a *figura* of prophecy, a kind of prophetic figure of reflection between promise and fulfilment, historical events and interpretation, reality and imagination.

The following section will attempt a kind of figural interpretation of the Reformation, considering the movements of closing, opening, and doubling hinted at above. This figural interpretation refers to time not as a formal condition but as a formative part of history. This section will thus propose an alternative conception of mediating time, in contrast to dominant approaches in the historiography of the Reformation. It thus not only recalls that the Reformation was an emergent phenomenon for contemporaries, it also draws conclusions from this knowledge on the level of interpretation. Instead of focusing on causalities and (technical, religious, or intellectual) progress, the analysis will consider interactions, mutual interdependencies, and regression. Up to now, historical research has hardly paid any attention to the question of how the massive spread of media was made theologically meaningful in the early sixteenth century. Media are not only facts but also fictions. Prophecies and prophets interlinked medial facts and fictions in the concept of transmission, as will be demonstrated below.

The first step will be to describe the late medieval discourse of the prophet, focusing on prophetic modes of knowledge and interpretation. The second step will be to look at the epistemology of the prophetic as an epistemology of the 'in between' and the precarious, taking the dialectic of promise and fulfilment as a starting point. The third step will be to outline the figure of the prophet within this epistemology, and the fourth and final step will be to elucidate the historical potency and reality of this figure, using Luther as an example.

The Late Medieval Discourse of the Prophet and his Modes of Knowledge

From the mid-fifteenth century, the renaissance of astrology and of ancient Hermeticism led to the emergence of a vast quantity of writing with prophetic content throughout Europe — prognostications, so-called *Praktiken* (texts with meteorological or astrological predictions, advice, etc.), prophecies, calendars, and almanacs.⁶ Among these texts, one stands out for its wide dissemination and the history of its reception, and it will be examined in more detail in

⁶ For pre-Reformation prophecy, see Rohr, 'Die Prophetie im letzten Jahrhundert vor der Reformation'; Kurze, 'Astrologie und Prophetie'; Hammerstein, 'The Battle of the Booklets'; Garin, *Astrologie der Renaissance*; Hoppmann, *Astrologie der Reformationszeit*.

Bye sal steen cyn aleer betrecht bynkende man sich staern
mit cym stabe in der linckten vnd cyn siegeln in der rechtten
hant. ligende vff cym der hat cyn rynde dy den sonern in
der rechtten hant als et ene erwurgen wulle das zeychen
Scorpio zwischen ene.



Eyn groſſe vnd ſere mercklich Conſtellation der ſweten groſſen planeten Sa/
turni vnd Jupiters erſchrecklich Coniunction die zukünfftig vnglück bedutte
iſt volkomen gewoſt In dem iar da man zalt. M. cccc. lxxxviii. iare an dem
xxv. dage Nouember. zu. vi. vten. iij. minutē nach mittage da des krebs grad vff ſteyr
ge vberten onſontem. Der ſelben planeten zu ſamē kōmūng oder Coniunction ſeldē
vnd nye dan wan vil iar vergange ſyn geſcheen mag vnd bringe dar vmb cyn ſter/
ken inſluſe. Die ſelben erſchrecklich Coniunctionen. hat zu ſich in ſyn hūſe enphangen.
das grauſam vnd vnglücklich heyrge ſcorpion In ſyn. xxij. grad vnd. xliij. minutē. dar
yn ſich ſtrauwer der vngetrurde ſtern Martis vnd das am allerdoſten iſt der ſcharpff
vnd koſe Saturnus hat myt ſynet erſchōung den gūten Jupiter verdruckt.

Figure 7.1. Lichtenberger, *Pronosticatio* (Heidelberg, c. 1490),
fol. Av^r: Meeting of Jupiter and Saturn, woodcut.

the following section. This is Johannes Lichtenberger's *Pronosticatio*, which was first published in Latin in 1488 and in German shortly after.⁷ Lichtenberger's text comprised ninety pages of print, mostly illustrated with woodcuts, giving a detailed description of the future destinies of the Church, the Empire, and the *gemeiner Mann*. *Pronosticatio* was inspired by an astronomic event, the meeting of Saturn and Jupiter in the sign of the Scorpio, which had been observable at the end of 1484, that is, four years before the book was first printed (Fig. 7.1).⁸

Since these two planets embodied opposing natures, their meeting was observed with the greatest concern.⁹ Against this background, Lichtenberger looked to the future with extreme scepticism. He prophesied serious conflicts in the Church, predicted severe adversity and decline for the Holy Roman Empire, and depicted the future of the *gemeiner Mann* using all the apocalyptic elements associated with downfall: discord, unchastity, prodigality and avarice, resulting in war, disease, famine, and death.

The content of Lichtenberger's prediction was by no means original; essentially, it simply repeated the topoi that can be found in all contemporary prophecies.¹⁰ It is of particular interest mainly because it also contained statements about the prophetic mode of knowledge, that is, about the foundations of the art of prophecy. At the very beginning of his exposition, Lichtenberger vehemently rejected the abstractness of rationalist forms of knowledge and expression. He

⁷ In the following section, quotes are taken from the Heidelberg edition, published around 1490: Lichtenberger, *Pronosticatio zu theutsch*. Between 1488 and 1530 Lichtenberger's text went through nineteen editions in German and Latin. For more details, see Peuckert, *Die große Wende*, I, 103–10; Talkenberger, *Sintflut*, pp. 58–110; Kurze, *Johannes Lichtenberger*; and Kurze, 'Popular Astrology and Prophecy'. Further information on Johannes Lichtenberger and his work can also be found here.

⁸ This meeting of the two planets furthest from the Earth in a sign of the zodiac is referred to as a 'great conjunction'. It happens only every twenty years and is, according to astrological theory, accompanied by major upheavals, such as wars, famines, the emergence of new religions, or environmental disasters. Cf. Boll, Bezold, and Gundel, *Sternglaube und Sterndeutung*, pp. 34ff.

⁹ The influence of Saturn inspired extraordinary fear in contemporary astrology, as it was regarded as the dark, inauspicious, ill-omened planet, associated with mortality, enmity, and war. In comparison Jupiter, the father of the gods, was fundamentally different, bringing success, satisfaction, benevolence, and justice. Jupiter was associated with a cheerful, youthful nature, linked with reason and erudition. Cf. *Astronomia Teutsch*.

¹⁰ In connection with Lichtenberger's prophecy, Will-Erich Peuckert speaks of 'something like a collected edition of Western astrologists from the end of the fifteenth century'; Peuckert, *Die große Wende*, I, 103.

By salften der meyster dīsa buche Enyen vnd mit
zu samen gelachten hendē bedē das nach geschriben gedert.



Die vnuswēdlich swerekeit dieser angekomē harte vnd tie grōße vnd tieffe der
dyngē sich begreiffen werde vnd der rede sprecher grōße menige emānē mich an
zu ruffen die gotz hulff dan ich angenommen hab vber meyn crafft dar vns sage
also.

Endyer si die grōße gotte maiestat des schepfers der mit syner allerhöchsten
wisheit von ewigkeit iglichen creature barmhertiglich versehen hat vnd das
er syn gütikeit inunt zur zyt vns erzeige mocht dar er eyn wunderlich heichen
am hymel in crafft der stern heissen setze nach synē willē die vnwādelbar ist. Den selbē
got vnd schepfer dā ich vnuwürdiger nyt das du myn redde war machest siant er mich
saren willest in erkennis der warheit dyner vergeychenē dan got hat von ewigkeyt
eygentlich geordnet die warweding syner zeychen als Gregorius spricht in dem .xj.
buche der hēdlichen sprache das nach in dieser welt die menschen geschichte an dēteil vū

Figure 7.2. Lichtenberger, *Pronosticatio zu theutsch*, (Heidelberg c. 1490),
fol. Aiiij^v: Lichtenberger as a prophet, woodcut.

did not care for the ‘zijrlichen worte der menschlichen weißheit’ (turned words of human wisdom), which were based on the knowledge of simple causal relations. Instead he was concerned with the ‘ertzeygung des geists vnd der warheit’ (presentation of the spirit and truth) in internal equivalences, analogies, and similarities.¹¹ This form of knowledge had its roots in the assumption that ontic relations were sublated in significative relations, that is, that inner ontological connections were contained in similarities. The stars were interpretable signs, because they affected the things that they signified, from which, conversely, they adapted their order, their laws, and their patterns of action.

What Lichtenberger was concerned with, then, was not so much a theory of signs as a theory of media. Every external correspondence expressed an effect which was conceived as a transfer or transmission (*Übertragung*). Thus knowledge was to be anchored in relations of transmission, and indeed the relations of transmission themselves were to be turned into a place where knowledge was formed, following the principle that people understand the ‘verstentliche warheit durch ußerliche werck’ (intelligible truth by external works).¹² Relations of transmission existed not only between the planets and the earth, but also between God and his prophet; then the prophet himself became an ambassador, that is, the bearer or medium of a new relationship of transmission, and the printed book or image eventually became his new body. This ubiquity of relations of transmission could not be separated from the content: indeed it was, in a sense, the actual message. A considerable proportion of the woodcuts accompanying Lichtenberger’s text do not evoke the content of prophecies but relations of transmission, be it situations of direct revelation or figurations from astrology and salvation history. Lichtenberger himself was depicted in such a situation of transmission (Fig. 7.2).

In the foreground at the right-hand side of the picture, he kneels on the ground with his hands clasped in prayer, wearing a long robe and holding a scroll which can be identified as the *Pronosticatio*. On the left-hand side at the top of the picture, God can be seen in the clouds, with a halo, an imperial orb, and a gesture of blessing.¹³ He faces the prophet and thus appears both as the addressee and the originator of the message. While Lichtenberger’s verbalized and printed predictions were primarily astrological interpretations, this image placed them in the context of a situation of revelation. Thus astrology and rev-

¹¹ Lichtenberger, *Pronosticatio zu theutsch*, fol. Aiiij^r.

¹² Lichtenberger, *Pronosticatio zu theutsch*, fol. Aiiij^r.

¹³ Cf. Talkenberger, *Sintflut*, p. 85.

elation did not contradict each other but pointed to the unity of an epistemological movement.¹⁴ Just as the first media of transmission, the stars, were also the causes of the things they signified, so did all subsequent media up to and including the printed book — as has been shown here — put into effect what they were transporting as a message. With reference to the absolute, to God himself, the medium and the message could not be separated. And the message was ultimately (and of necessity) always the end of the world, since the media undermined this world as a place of exchange and commerce, circulating messages, news, and events, as a place of vice and debauchery. The relations of transmission which provided the epistemic basis for prophecy thus prefigured the future of their own dissolution: the apocalypse as revelation, as the last transmission event, which put an end to all subsequent transmissions and all subsequent prophecies by bringing about the demise of the ‘great whore of Babylon’. Thus an intrinsic connection between apocalyptic promise and fulfilment developed as the message was transmitted.¹⁵

The Prophetic Epistemology of the ‘in between’ and the Precarious

The prophetic predictions were statements of a special kind — statements that linked their claim to truth and validity with the facticity of relations of transmission and their dynamization.¹⁶ This had two epistemological implications. The first implication was that prophetic statements had no lasting, stable subject matter, but tended to refer to something that was appearing, becoming, or moving. Their starting point was a diagnosis of the present: the idea of decline was omnipresent and ubiquitous, ‘[der mit der] zeyt an die

¹⁴ Lichtenberger also explicitly emphasized the revelatory nature of his insights: cf. Lichtenberger, *Pronosticatio zu theutsch*, fol. Aiiij’.

¹⁵ Lichtenberger’s prophecy is therefore paradigmatic in content as well as in form. Most of the astrological prophecies of which, as mentioned above, thousands of copies were published and printed around 1500, followed the programme set out here, that of an *Enthüllung-protokoll* (record of a discovery or revelation), which had been formulated in the book of Revelation. They portrayed the world in terms of the exchange of goods and news, as a self-obsessed, sinful Babel, whose downfall was absolutely certain to occur. Cf. Vogl, ‘Apokalypse als Topos der Medienkritik’, p. 136.

¹⁶ Here it should be noted that these relations of transmission were extremely complex, precisely because they were produced and reproduced in a complex communicative situation. Calculations, combinations, and interpretations converged with the media of the text, the diagram, and the image. Cf. Fischer, ‘Grammatik der Sterne’, and Schoener, ‘Weissagungen und Reformation’.

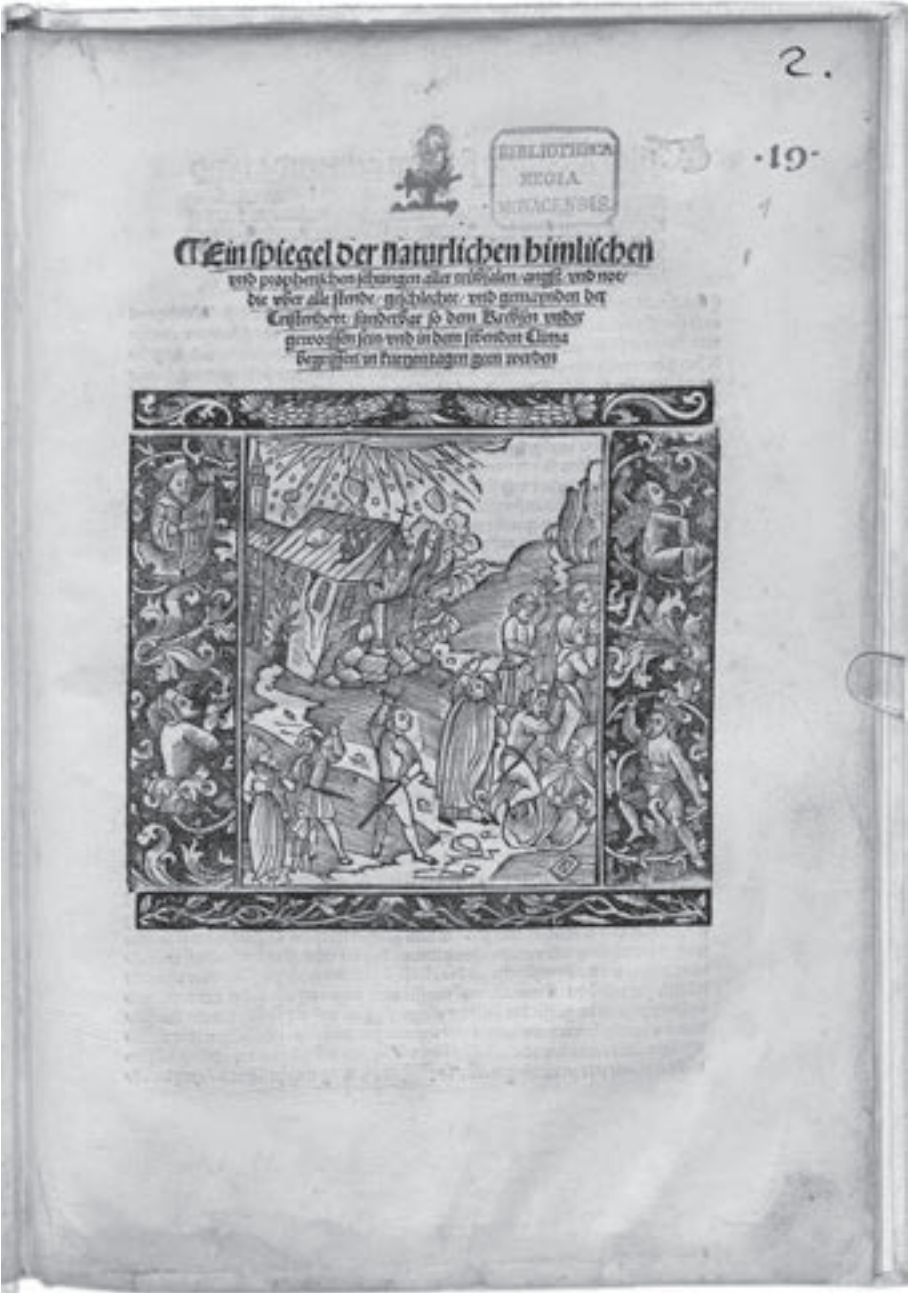


Figure 7.3. Grünpeck, *Spiegel*, Nuremberg 1508:
frontispiece, woodcut.

thür vnser gewissen anklopffet' (that knocks in the course of time on our conscience's door), as stated in Josef Grünpeck's influential and much-printed 1508 text *Ein Spiegel der natürlichen himlischen und prophetischen sehungen aller trübsalen* (A Mirror of the Natural Celestial and Prophetical Previsions of All Afflictions) (Fig. 7.3).¹⁷

The diagnosis of the present constituted the first reference, which initiated and indeed necessitated the interpretations focused on the future. This reference, however, was repeatedly suspended in the course of the astrological/prophetic interpretation of signs, in order to grant the signs themselves an ontic status and therefore efficacy. Thus for example Grünpeck took the decline diagnosed for his own time as evidence of a future downfall of the 'Kunigreych Furstenthumb vnd all mechtig gemeynden diser welt / vnd nachuolgent sant Peters schiffel' (kingdoms, principalities, and all powerful communities of this world, and finally the barque of St Peter), which he ascribed to 'vill auffführen / zwitrachten / vnd krieg' (leading to riots, discord, and war) and thus to the decline in human manners and morals.¹⁸ At the same time, however, he interpreted this decline as the sign of a 'haymlichen verborgenen einfluß[es] des himels' (secret, hidden impact of heaven), which had led to the 'vbertretung götlicher vnd menschlicher gesetze' (transgression of divine and human laws).¹⁹ The diagnosis of the present thus initiated a semiotic process during which it evolved into a different kind of reference; it began as the starting point for the interpretation of signs, from which the signs acquired their meaning, and ended up as the consequence of this interpretation. In other words, the reference shifted during the processes of signification, and this shift was perpetuated. Ultimately, all unidirectional references were suspended, and transformatory, inversive, and configurative elements took centre stage. In an epistemological sense, then, prophecies produced precarious states; they turned the 'in between' into a place of historical change and of the perception and observation of this change.

¹⁷ Josef Grünpeck, *Ein Spiegel der natürlichen himlischen und prophetischen sehungen aller trübsalen, angst, vnd not, die vber alle stende, geschlechter, vnd gemaynden der Christenheyt, sonderbar so dem Krebsen vnder geworffen sein, vnd in dem sibenden China begriffen, in kurzen tagen geen werden*, fol. Aij'. Grünpeck's predictions were, along with those of Lichtenberger, some of the most prominent and widely disseminated in the early sixteenth century. For more on Grünpeck, cf. Talkenberger, *Sintflut*, pp. 110–45, and Czerny, 'Der Humanist und Historiograph Kaiser Maximilians I. Joseph Grünpeck'.

¹⁸ Grünpeck, *Ein Spiegel*, fol. Aij'.

¹⁹ Grünpeck, *Ein Spiegel*, fol. Aij'.

The second epistemological implication mentioned above is connected with these constant shifts in reference, but is concerned with the form of the statements — in particular their temporality and consistency — rather than their subject matter. The anchoring of predictions in relations of transmission lent a particular topicality to the events predicted, since there was no distinction between the act of communication and the information communicated. Transmission and effect were one. The prophetic prediction proved to be deeply implicated in this logic of relations of transmission, inasmuch as it was a transmission itself. It inscribed itself into the very apocalyptic turning point which it predicted; indeed, each prediction helped to bring about this turning point.²⁰ And thus it was ultimately condemned to share the fate of all transmissions, that of being absorbed or indeed obliterated by the process of transmission itself. Every astrological prediction was a datum that produced an effect as it was transmitted, but was always consigned to oblivion in the process.

So if everything that was given was only given in the process of change, this inherently included the prophetic modes of knowledge. The diagnosed loss of the Christian order was thus synonymous with the loss of a form of knowledge, which had no time index. The prophecies incorporated the temporality of the transmission event and also reflected their own temporality, in the arsenal of ‘*menschlicher sinreychigkeyt / der himelischen kunst / vnd der götlichen haymlichen offenbarungen*’ (human ingeniousness, celestial art, and the secret divine revelation).²¹ In prophetic literature itself, a relevant image emerged for this situation of extensive epistemological upheaval and its dangers: the image of St Peter’s barque, drifting rudderless over the sea, in danger of sinking, or already shipwrecked.²² This motif contained a great deal of potential for epistemological reflection: the sea was a cipher for relations of transmission per se and had clear apocalyptic connotations in the book of Revelation, representing the godless flow of goods, commodities, and information which would be terminated by the Day of Judgement. In positive terms, however (with reference to Noah’s Ark), St Peter’s barque could also be associated with rescue in tumultuous times. This required a good helmsman, who would navigate the

²⁰ The astrological/prophetic predictions thus not only reflected a new medial situation; they not only defined its dangers for the future, but they also became laboratories for new forms of knowledge, which corresponded to this medial situation. Cf. Fischer, ‘Grammatik der Sterne’, pp. 204ff.

²¹ Grünpeck, *Ein Spiegel*, fol. Aij’.

²² Cf. Peuckert, *Die grosse Wende*, I, 75–89; Scribner: *For the Sake of Simple Folk*, pp. 108–15.

wenden. Es müet ein solch bewelen vnd schreyen vnder den Ersten essien. das einer zum andern sagen müet. wer nit besser wu wenn in mitter leb vermitet worden. allen es wu den etlich neydich menschen gefunden. die deit red des heiligen mans vertragen wolten. vnd sagen die propheten. als von vil vntersuren mächen geschichte. wenn von lang tode. es blin niemants mit künfftige ding sagen. das die Astronomen schreyen auch alle erlogene ding. die selbigen seynde der warheit nütgen in keinem weg durch das gijst irer falscheit. grobheyt vnd vnuerstandigheyt fur humen. damit der fluß der ewigen glückseyt nicht einfließt. den summen menschen die grunde künfftige ding verassen. Die wen den auch die baymglückseyt der 1888chen künst der Astronomen damit nicht anseymen. so lesen den. nicht auff deß stundt die propheten. wail was sie vorgelegt haben von den paylungen der jaden. vñ irer reiche verendung vñ einstellung mag auff die ganz Cristlich kirchen vñ alle irer glider Königreich vñ furstenthum gezogen werden. daru gelaut abeyt die menschlich sinneichigheyt die vñ irer kleren glanz der gleichen erleuchtung ange. sundt vñ erleuchtet. mag auff der yegenschaffen dengen. eygenschaften vñ künfftige ding abnehmen. Daru seind ach die nachigen des heiligen mans. sein ja vil warhaffig vñ mit einem solchen grunde widerstehet. das sie nicht leydlich mögen widergetrifen werden. vñ dier zusehe haben wail ich merket die besetzung meiner maynung vol. sehen.

Das drit Capitel vñ ryan die gemeyn sag

erleuchtung ist das sein Priester schenken sol ja dier jaden an vil jels der vñ gijst zerlossen. vñ die got ergötten sein. mangendiglich betruet werden.



Figure 7.4. Grünpeck, *Ein Spiegel*, Nuremberg 1508, fol. Av^r:
The sinking ship of the Church, woodcut.

ship through all storms and tempests, by submitting to the rules of the sea and placing his trust in the ‘vrteil des höchsten gotz’ (judgement of the supreme God).²³ If there was no helmsman, however — and this was the situation of the Church around 1500, according to most prognoses —, then the ship was in imminent danger of getting into difficulties and sinking:

[D]as schiffin des heiligen sant Peters, according to Lichtenberger’s text, [werde] in der vngestymigkeit vnd betrubnis dißer welt lyden, [es werde] geiaget widder vnd fure mit mancherley betrübung verfolgung vnd reitzung vnd wirt genesen oder in grundt gen[,] sten als vff eyner glichen wagen.²⁴

(St Peter’s barque will suffer from the furiousness and grief of the world, will be chased, saddened, persecuted and attacked, will recover or perish — it is on the edge.).

Significantly, the aim of St Peter’s barque did not seem to involve reaching the safety of land. As in the frontispiece of Grünpeck’s *Spiegel*, a rock in the sea could spell disaster for the ship of the Church (Fig. 7.4).

Here the prow of the ship of the Church, which bears the image of the Crucifixion on its sail, is already underwater, and part of the crew (which includes a bishop, a cardinal, a monk, and a pope) is in danger of disappearing with it under the waves. Two other people in the stern of the ship, whose clothing identifies them as high-level secular dignitaries, are at least in danger of sinking, while a group of armed men on the left-hand side of the picture watch the drama. On the right-hand side a precipitous rock tufted with vegetation is visible. This motif was incorporated in the text, which states ‘das sant Peters schiffen sol zu disen jaren an vil fels der vngesel zerstoßen [werden]’ (that St Peter’s barque will smash against many rocks of adversity in these years).²⁵ This is striking, given that the rock had been the medieval symbol for the permanence of the Church. Evidently the rock had become less convincing as a place of timelessness, of eternity or, to put it differently, of clear referential relationships; indeed, it had even become a danger.²⁶

²³ Lichtenberger, *Pronosticatio zu theutsch*, fol. Bj^r.

²⁴ Lichtenberger, *Pronosticatio zu theutsch*, fols Bj^r–Bij^r. In Lichtenberger’s text, too, the chapter concerned with the distressed barque of St Peter was illustrated by a woodcut, described in the caption as follows: ‘Die kyrche ym schiff mit iren riemen geneickt vnd vff vnd abe zu dantzen’ (The church in the barque inclined with its straps and dancing up and down) (fol. Bj^r).

²⁵ Grünpeck, *Ein Spiegel*, fol. Av^r.

²⁶ See also Talkenberger, *Sintflut*, pp. 129ff.

In the *Sintflutdebatte* (the debate about the imminence of a second Flood), which dominated the decades after 1500 and continued to intensify until 1524, the motif of a monstrous deluge was most often evoked in connection with the religious situation at the time.²⁷ Great floods were predicted, and conflicts between the *gemeiner Mann* and the Church, since this was to be not just the year of a 'great conjunction' but of a meeting of all the planets visible at the time, including the sun and the moon, in the sign of Pisces. Besides Lichtenberger's and Grünpeck's predictions, another important text in the German-speaking area was a lengthy work by the Brandenburg court astrologer, Johannes Carion, first printed in 1521 and entitled *Prognosticatio vnd erklerung der grossen wesserung / Auch anderer erschrockenlichenn / wuerckungen* (Prognostication and Explanation of the Major Flood / Also Other Appalling Effects) (Fig. 7.5).²⁸

Carion vividly imagined the consequences of this 'hymlichen influentz' (celestial influence): disunity and strife between the clergy and the laity, a great deciding battle with the Turkish army, and finally a 'gantze veränderung vnd reformation der Christenlichen kirchen' (comprehensive change and reformation of the Christian churches).²⁹ These events would be accompanied by great natural disasters, especially by Flood-like rainfalls which would assume apocalyptic dimensions. The astrological justification for the Flood scenario was that Pisces was a watery sign of the zodiac.

The idea of the Flood repeated the biblical image for the tension between a traffic in money and goods, which had succumbed to pure immanence, and God's irrevocable termination of these self-obsessed human relations of communication and commerce. While numerous predictions for this year did come true, such as the rebellion of the *gemeiner Mann* and the religious entanglements that were apparent everywhere, the Flood itself, at least as an actual *grosse*

²⁷ Cf. Talkenberger, *Sintflut*, pp. 210–19; Talkenberger, 'Die Sintflutprophetie 1524'; Talkenberger, "Die Bewegung der himlischen schar". For the extent of the *Sintflutdebatte* in Europe, see Zambelli, 'Fine del mondo o inizio della propaganda?.'

²⁸ Carion, *Prognosticatio*. For more on Carion's prophecy, see Fricke-Hilgers: '...das der historiographus auch sei ein erfarnen der gschicht des himels'. Incidentally, a further undated edition of Carion's *Prognosticatio* was also adorned with an image of the ship of the Church in distress.

²⁹ Carion, *Prognosticatio*, fol. Bij^v. This was also the context for the prediction of '[eines] bößhaften Endchristes, [eines] son der verderblickeyt' (a malicious Antichrist, a son of perishability), who — accompanied by 'tzeychen vnd mirakel — wirt verführen die gerechten mit den vngerechten / wirt eingon in die stadt Jerusalem / vnd sich setzen in den tempel wie got' (signs and miracles will seduce the just with the unjust, will enter into the city of Jerusalem, and sit in the temple like God) (fol. Biiij^{r-v}).

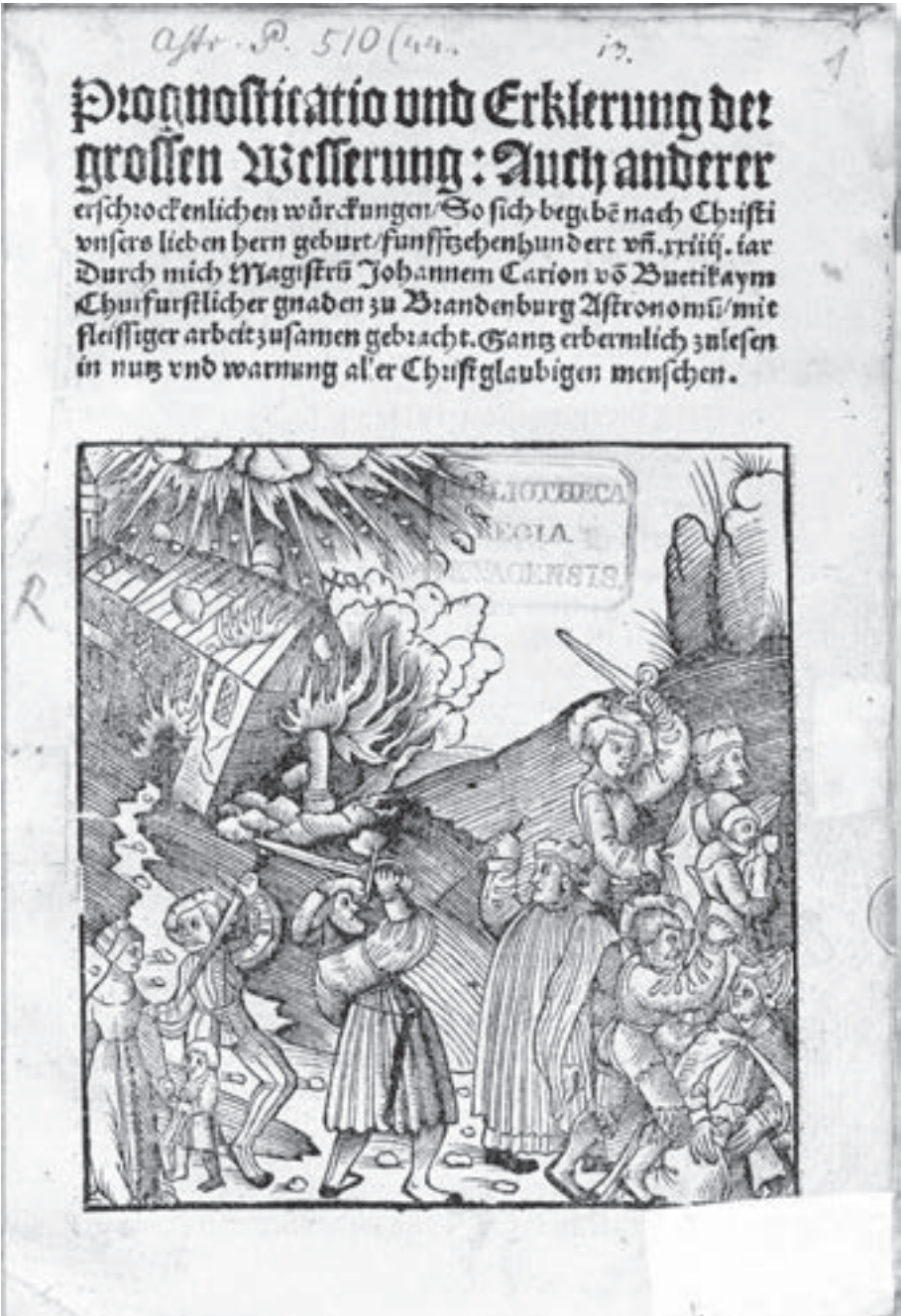


Figure 7.5. Carion, *Prognosticatio*, Leipzig 1521, frontispiece, woodcut.

Wessering, did not occur. Metaphorically, however, 1524 was the year with the greatest flood of printed matter ever seen up to that point.³⁰ In this sense the prediction of the Flood had come true, indeed, the prophetic discourse itself had brought about the outcome it was predicting: apparently uncontrollable floods of distribution and dissemination, inundating all that was traditional, not least the religious order, and drowning it in a sea of confusing relations of transmission.³¹ This flood scenario, of course, included not only prognostic and astrological publications but also Reformation texts, which similarly reached their quantitative peak in 1524. The two genres intensified into a ubiquitous transmission event.³² Constant shifts in reference and temporalization of the formation of knowledge: these, then, are the two fundamental epistemological implications of the prophecies. Both find their basis in the actual medial preconditions but also create these preconditions by driving the print-based distribution of news, messages, and transmissions to previously unimagined heights. In this sense it would be possible to speak of a performative discourse, in which a realm of the 'in between' and the precarious emerges, where there are no codifications, only dynamized relations of transmission between apocalyptic promise and fulfilment.

The Figure of the Prophet within the Epistemology of the Precarious

Within the epistemology of the precarious outlined above, the figure of the prophet had its specific place. The following section will first define this place in general terms, considering the prophetic/astrological literature, then reflect on the reality and historical potency of the prophet, using the example of Luther and the Reformation. It should be noted that the prophet only becomes a *figura* in the contemporary sense of a dual figure of promise and fulfilment if the historical events do actually become one, in his person, with the conditions of his knowledge, that is, the constant shifts in reference and temporalization. This initially brings us back to Lichtenberger's *Pronosticatio*: in his prophecy,

³⁰ Cf. Köhler, 'The Flugschriften'. Fischer counts (admittedly for the whole of Europe) a total of 160 pamphlets, by 60 authors, of which at least 150,000 copies had been distributed. For the numbers, see Talkenberger, *Sintflut*, pp. 154ff.; Fischer, 'Grammatik der Sterne', pp. 196ff.; Schoener, 'Weissagungen und Reformation', pp. 80ff.

³¹ The idea that the Flood was actually the media event constituted by predictions of the Flood was already reflected in contemporary writings. Cf., e.g., Tannstetter Collimitius, *Zweren und gefallen des durchleuchtigsten Großmechtigen Fürsten und herrn*, fols A^r and Aij^r.

³² See also Schoener, 'Weissagungen und Reformation', esp. p. 91.



Figure 7.6. Lichtenberger, *Pronosticatio* (Heidelberg, c. 1490), fol. Fv^r: The monk-prophet, woodcut.

Lichtenberger gives a body and face to the eschatological upheaval he has diagnosed. At the end of the second part he predicts the arrival of a monk — [*eines*] *cleynen Propheten*, as he calls him —, who has been born under the influence of the conjunction of 1484 (Fig. 7.6).

‘Ich sage,’ writes Lichtenberger, ‘das ym lande der scorpion vnderworffen wirt geborn ein prophet der wirt vorbezeichnet durch etliche wunderliche gesicht tzeichen vnnd ander seltzen prodigien die vorhene in der lofft gesehen warden’ (I predict that in a country subordinated the scorpion shall be born a prophet; he will be announced through many miraculous signs and other rare prodigies seen previously in the air).³³ This prophet, he predicts, will go out into the world nineteen years after his birth, accompanied by a second monk, would preach there for another nineteen years, and establish a new religious congregation. He would possess outstanding qualities signalling his astrological mission: ‘[E]r wirt zwartz flecken haben am lybe vnd brune tzeichen vnd mackeln gemanigfeldigt am rechten siten bym schoße vnd der hoffte eyn vnge-schaffen lichnam wirt er han’ (He will have black marks on his body and numerous brown signs and blemishes on the right side of his lap and haunch; he will have an uncreated corpus).³⁴ Black spots and other signs on his body would reflect the influence of the stars, which would enable him to seduce the people, with great strength of mind and a gift for dissimulation, through miracles, sermons, and signs: ‘[D]ießer prophet [wird] den goden vnd den düfeln erschrecklich syn[,] viel tzeichen vnd wunderwerck wirt er thun’ (This prophet will be frightening for the goodies and the devils and will do numerous signs and marvellous works).³⁵

The *cleyne Prophet* appeared repeatedly in prophecies from the early decades of the sixteenth century.³⁶ In Carion’s *Prognosticatio* his coming was predicted in connection with the meeting between Jupiter, representing the clergy, and Mars, embodying the knightly class, in 1521. Carion described him as a simple man ‘nicht eines hohen standes’ (not of higher rank) who would continue to live in ‘einigkeyt und stille [...] gar nahe tzwey iar’ (unity and silence [...] for two years) but would then rise up ‘wider grosse heupter der geistlickeyt’ (against the grand heads of clergy) and would become ‘shedlich allen Jouisten: Sein anhang vnd hilf wirt groß / vnd mechtig. Er wirt siglich vnd vnuberwintlich / sein

³³ Lichtenberger, *Pronosticatio zu theutsch*, fol. Fiiij^{r-v}.

³⁴ Lichtenberger, *Pronosticatio zu theutsch*, fol. Fv^r.

³⁵ Lichtenberger, *Pronosticatio zu theutsch*, fol. Fv^r.

³⁶ Further information in Fischer, ‘Grammatik der Sterne’, pp. 205–10.



Erwache jr Christen mitter: von dem schluff der sunden: und schrecket auff die sende
eures gebdens: und aller eurer sinnen: und vernemet meine wort mit fleys. Darumb das
jr die gabe gottes: und das gelyck: wider habe abgeworffen in die gruben der verlauffen:
heit der vergessung: und verachting: und hant angefangen in der urenung der tagen: nar-
rich und nachlassig: aber in der boßheit gang weyl: lügen: und firsichtig sein: alle sel-
ligkeit und gerechtigkeit: wartern in dem schreyen: und die der alten den betriben: we-
nen und weynen: ersehen zu werden: das heilige güt: Christi in der wolustigkeit des leybs
zuansichwerden: die vergessene fleischlich begier mit dem eßend: und schrecklich der
juchstanten: und aller eyglicher und vnnatlicher verdanckheit: wider auff: ewig
verantwurtliche gerechtigkeyt: mit allem falsch: unrecht: erben und sünden: zuerlangen
Und die kirchen ist durch eine bestirte: wein ein hauf des tuffs: dießere: und andere
ist noch nicht: gesungen: werden die lösgang des herren: sinder die geseßene: und
geseßene: lösgang des tuffs: Darumb: sinder nach wenig tag: und die Christen:
lichen: sinder werden: fallen: bis zum grunde: der versachen: halben: klerdet: nach mit den sachen
der: bestir: wein: und leyb: Und: es dem meysen: bis zum: muslen: lauffen: den: herren: er-
gegen: mit: erben: weynen: und: klagen: so: mag: geschicht: das: er: sich: er: sich: als: vber
die: tumben: geschicht: ist: erbarmen: So: jr: aber: nie: werde: das: weiden: werden: die: tag
der: trübsal: angst: und: not: schencklich: ersicheren: es: reddet: an: sinder: jr: sinder:
an: den: gestatten: die: fluss: der: wasser: werde: an: sinder: darmit: sie: ewig: leben: gütlichen: er-
pschen: jr: werde: die: tuch: und: ab: schluff: der: berg: an: sinder: darmit: sie: ewig: werden: in
der: ab: schluff: lüchlichen: ab: weiden: Jem: jr: werde: die: baum: in: den: weiden: mit: weynen:
augen: ersehen: das: sie: ewig: hals: an: jr: nist: lassen: gehangen: und: es: den: vögel: vorjet

Figure 7.7. Grünpeck, *Spiegel*, Nuremberg 1508, fol. Av^v: The monk-prophet, woodcut.

sterck vnd macht wirt erfahren in der Christenheyt' (harmful for all rulers: His following and auxiliary will become great and mighty. He will be victorious and insurmountable, Christendom will feel his strength and power).³⁷ The figure of the prophet also played an important part in Grünpeck's *Spiegel*, in the form of a preacher of repentance (*Bußprediger*) wandering through 'Frantzosischer und welischer landt' (French and Italian territory).³⁸ This preacher of repentance, according to Grünpeck, not only criticized the dissolution apparent everywhere, people's godlessness and sinfulness, but also vehemently denounced the Church, which had become 'ein hauß des raubs / dieberey / vnd morderey [...], in welchem nicht gesungen werden die lobgesang des herren / sunder die gotzlesterung vnd gotzschwerungen / lobgesang des tewfels' (a house of robbery, thievery, and murder [...], in which not the Lord is praised; instead blasphemy and heresy is initiated, the canticle of the devil).³⁹ Grünpeck's prophet is also placed in the context of stellar and celestial relations of transmission — not in the text but in a woodcut preceding the chapter (Fig. 7.7).

What we see is a bearded man wearing a cowl and a hood, standing on a small hill in a biblical-looking landscape and preaching. In each hand he holds up a crucifix in a gesture of adjuration — obviously to admonish his listeners, who stand or lie at his feet. There are four of them: three plainly dressed men and a woman wearing a nun's habit.⁴⁰

In the picture, the effect of the apocalyptic prediction described in the text is shown in the gestures and facial expressions of the listeners, which leave no doubt about their extreme despair and helplessness. Numerous celestial phenomena can be discerned in the upper third of the picture, surrounding the prophet. These are stars, visions of the cross, and representations of certain instruments of Christ's passion which have been mentioned in the text. The two crucifixes the prophet holds in his hands thus become part of the celestial phenomena, visually reinforcing the impression of a direct transmission, a direct revelation. In addition, the stars and the *arma Christi* establish the connection between astrological aspects and salvation history. Grünpeck's prophet is thus an instrument of God and, in equal measure, a direct expression of stellar influences.

³⁷ Carion, *Prognosticatio*, fol. Aiiij^{r-v}.

³⁸ Grünpeck, *Ein Spiegel*, fol. Aiiij^v.

³⁹ Grünpeck, *Ein Spiegel*, fol. Av^r.

⁴⁰ See also Talkenberger, *Sintflut*, pp. 133ff.

He was not simply a figure representing change but one representing the change of the change; he was not a figure in which contemporary knowledge was crystallized and fixed, but one in which the formation of knowledge itself was always temporalized and thus acquired a time index. The new in its capacity as new could enter the space created by the prophet as a figure of reflection; change could be legitimized as change. In him, ultimately, the world of potentially endless chains of reference and dynamized relations of transmission unfolding in the medium of print could take on an epochal character. Around 1500, admittedly, the price of this legitimacy was the end of the world. This was also the price paid by the Reformation, which developed its historical potency as a prophetic/apocalyptic figuration.

The Reality of the Prophet: Luther and the Reformation

In the 1520s there was a widespread conviction that Martin Luther was the monk-prophet whose coming had been prophesied. Included among those who explicitly linked Luther with Lichtenberger's monk-prophet were Luther's opponent Johannes Cochlaeus, the Catholic convert Friedrich Staphylus, and Paracelsus, who, in 1529/30, wrote *Auslegung uber ettliche Figuren Joh. Lichtenbergers*.⁴¹ As well as Luther's Roman opponents, however, many of his followers linked the prophecy with the Wittenberg reformer. The effect of Lichtenberger's prophecy even extended into Luther's immediate circle. In particular, Luther's close confidant and friend Philipp Melanchthon was deeply convinced of the reformer's astrological mission and vigorously debated the matter with the Brandenburg court astrologer Johannes Carion, and also with the Italian astrologer and counter-reformer Lucas Gauricus.⁴² This idea was disseminated in numerous printed texts and was popularized not least by numerous pictorial representations.⁴³ Thus, for example, in a text written in 1527 by Hans Sachs and Andreas Osiander, entitled *Ein wunderliche weissagung von dem Bapstumb*, Luther was portrayed as the monk-prophet whose coming had been prophesied (Fig. 7.8).

⁴¹ Cf. the remarks by Kurze, *Johannes Lichtenberger*, pp. 57–62.

⁴² For Melanchthon and astrology in Wittenberg, see Caroti, *Melanchthon's Astrology*, pp. 109–21, and Hoppmann, *Melanchthons Astrologie*.

⁴³ Of the total of fourteen Latin and German editions of Lichtenberger's prophecies, eight were published between 1526 and 1528. Cf. *Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des 16. Jahrhunderts*.



Figure 7.8. Andreas Osiander, *Ein wunderliche weissagung*,
 Zwickau 1527, woodcut, Luther as monk-prophet.

The woodcut shows a monk, standing upright, holding a sickle in his right hand as a sign of mortality, and a rose in his left hand. The link with the reformer is also made explicit in the text in a reference to the rose, which had appeared in numerous publications since 1519 as a symbol for Luther: ‘Damit man aber sehe / wer der Münch sey / so stehet er da ynn seiner kleidung vnd hat sein zeichen / die rosen ynn der handt / ich meyn ia es sey der Luther’ (In order to be able to recognize who the monk is, he presents himself in his clothes holding his distinctive mark — the rose — in his hand; I’m sure it is Luther).⁴⁴

Luther himself, however, always emphasized his rejection of astrology and its prophetic art.⁴⁵ Despite his reservations, however, the reformer not only endorsed a new edition of Lichtenberger’s *Pronosticatio* by Hans Lufft in Wittenberg in 1527, but also provided his own preface, in which he explicitly made connections with the Reformation.⁴⁶ Elsewhere Luther also affirms the apocalyptic analyses and interpretations of the astrologists, for example, in connection with the prophecy of the second Flood:

Darumb ich darauff stehe, das der hymlichen scharen bewegung sey gewißlich die tzukunftige constellation der planeten, daruber die sternmeyster sagen, es solle eyne syndflut bedeuten, got gebe, das der iungst tag sey, wilchen sie gewißlich bedeutet.⁴⁷

(This is why I am convinced that the celestial events can be identified with the future constellation of the planets that the astrologers interpret as an announcement of the Flood; God willing, it is the Last Day, surely it is).

At numerous points, Luther explicitly refers to himself as a prophet. However, he does not always mean this in the sense of a higher or divine inspiration, since, he affirms, all who ‘an Christum glewben’ (believe in Christ) are prophets.⁴⁸ However, though, he does insist that he has received his reformatory

⁴⁴ Sachs and Osiander, *Ein wunderliche weissagung*, fol. Ciiij^v. See also Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk*, pp. 146ff.

⁴⁵ For Luther’s relationship with astrology, see Lämmel, ‘Luthers Verhältnis zur Astronomie und Astrologie’; Ludolph, ‘Luthers Verhältnis zur Astrologie’.

⁴⁶ Lichtenberger, *Die Weissagunge Johannis Lichtenbergers deudsch / zugericht mit vleys*. Without abandoning his fundamental polemic against astrology, he did give some credence here to Lichtenberger’s analyses and interpretations. Cf. Vorrhede Martini Luthers, fols Aj^v–Bj^v, this quote, fol. Aiiij^v–v. The preface is also reproduced in Luther, *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, xxiii, 1–12.

⁴⁷ Luther, ‘Adventspostille’, p. 108, ll. 1–5.

⁴⁸ Luther, ‘Predigten über den 2. Petrusbrief’, pp. 29, l. 12.

insight ‘von gottis gnaden vom hymel’ (through the grace of God from heaven), and thus emphasizes his close connection — if not to God himself, at least to the word of God.⁴⁹ In this sense Luther also defined himself as a *praedicator*, that is, as someone who made predictions by interpreting and proclaiming God’s word.⁵⁰ Because he speaks with God’s words, his predictions are generally accurate. ‘Ich weissage nicht gern’, writes Luther, ‘will auch nicht weissagen, Denn, was ich weissage, sonderlich das böse, kompt gemeiniglich mehr denn mir lieb ist [...]. Denn weil ich Gottes wort rede, so mus es geschehen’ (I don’t like prophesying, and I also don’t want to prophesy, because that what I prophesy — especially the evil — occurs more than I like [...]. Because I speak God’s word, it has to happen).⁵¹ Luther’s prophecy thus resulted from an interpretation of the world in the words and images of Holy Scripture. The significative relationships that had to be decoded here were no longer between planetary orbits and earthly events, yet even these relationships were not simply interpretations, but transmissions. Exegesis and prophecy were identical, because the world was reflected in the Bible, and repeated what was announced there.

With this ubiquity of the transmissions between the word of God and the world, Luther also initiated constant shifts in reference. The fulfilment of the word of God, its imminent revelation in the world, could not be separated from the world’s self-revelation. Money, goods, commodities, and information were circulating as never before in the history of humanity — not least because of the ‘newen fund[s] [des] buchdrucken[s]’ (new invention of printing).⁵² Productivity, activity, and processes of exchange characterized the world, constituting it as a material sequence of events in which the relays, the reloading points, had replaced all deeper referential structures. The world now referred only to itself, which meant, however, that it referred to its biblically predicted end. Thus the world had to perish, not because the end of a process of dissolution had been reached, but because — in the ‘event-ness’ of its transmissions — the question of the reference was repeatedly suspended, leading to an epistemology that deployed the predicted signs as if they were real and effective. Thus the apparently simple logic by which, in the diagnosis of the reformers, the sinful world was turning away from God’s word, articulated a turning of the world itself towards the ubiquity of that symbolic character which was neces-

⁴⁹ Luther, ‘Contra Henricum regem Angliae’, p. 228, l. 27.

⁵⁰ Cf. *WA Tischreden*, p. 217, ll. 6–8.

⁵¹ Luther, ‘Vorrede zu Johann Sutel’, p. 667, ll. 14–17.

⁵² Luther, ‘Adventspostille’, pp. 96, 11.

sary if salvation history was to be fulfilled — necessary because the end time was itself a ubiquitous transmission event. Because what the signs before the Day of Judgement carried within themselves was nothing other than the inner structure of those transmission events which now characterized the world. These too were not signs in the sense of simple referential connections, ‘nicht leer noch ledige zeichen’, as observed by Luther’s pupil in Wittenberg, Justus Menius.⁵³ Their message was one with the transmission event in which they were constituted as signs. And for this reason, conversely, all events, all transmissions were also signs, which always produced what they actually signified. In the endlessness of the reference shifts, salvation history was fulfilled and entered into its final stage.⁵⁴

The belief that the Day of Judgement was at hand thus had its basis in an earthly present which in a sense brought forth the celestial signs — by the very fact that it had never been more earthly, more economically successful, more socially and scientifically active, more advanced — and more self-obsessed. In this logic, the Lutheran prophet now attained his specific eschatological significance. Even if an initial reference, the self-obsessed world, was needed in order to recognize the biblical signs and words as such, this reference always had to be suspended later on, during the interpretation of the signs, in the interests of a successful reading. The prophet did this in a particular manner. He pointed to the world’s godlessness, based on the endlessness of relations of transmission, and exhorted the faithful to repent, in view of the danger threatening their salvation. He was not able to see into the future more clearly than others; however, instead he determined the future in a specific way: he himself initiated a transmission event, or was the transmission itself, a mere message, as it were. And, as shown to striking effect in a woodcut by Matthias Gerung, created around 1550, he had a double form (Fig. 7.9).⁵⁵

⁵³ Menius, *Der Widdertauffer lere vnd geheimnis*, fol. Bj^r.

⁵⁴ ‘Die weil wir sehen / das alle die zeichen vnd furleufft / so vns durch die heiligen Propheten vnd Aposteln / ja auch durch vnsern grossen heiland Jesum Christum selbst jnn der heiligen schrift / fur so langer zeit / verkündiget sind vnd angezeigt / jetzund auff einen hauffen so gewaltig herein brechen / vnd sich gleich mit einander dringen / als besorgeten sie sich / die zeit möchte jhnen zu kurtz werden / das eins nach dem andern nicht wol folgen / vnd mit der zeit ergehen möchten’ (And now we see that all the signs and events, that were announced and declared long ago by the holy prophets and apostles, and even by our great Saviour Jesus Christ, come in tremendously and compress themselves as if they are worried about the decreasing time and its order of one by one); Menius, *Der Widdertauffer lere vnd geheimnis*, fol. Bj^r.

⁵⁵ Gerung’s woodcut comes from a series of woodcuts commissioned by Otto Henry and created between 1544 and 1558 to illustrate a commentary on the book of Revelation by the Bern reformer Sebastian Meyer. Cf. Roettig, *Reformation als Apokalypse*.



Figure 7.9. Matthias Gerung, *Codex germanicus* 6592, [n. p.] 1544–58: The mighty angel from the book of Revelation and a Reformation preacher as a mighty angel, woodcut.

In this pair of images, a Reformation preacher, easily identifiable as Luther, was associated with the mighty angel in the book of Revelation, and thus quite specifically characterized as a *figura*, signifying not only itself but also the other, which in turn included the *figura* and was fulfilled in it.⁵⁶ Since 1519, in Reformation-minded circles, the prophetic prediction had repeatedly been

⁵⁶ For a detailed analysis of this pair of pictures and of Luther as a mighty angel see Roettig, *Reformation als Apokalypse*, pp. 160–66, for the right-hand picture, see esp. p. 162: ‘In the centre of the picture, in a similar pose to the mighty angel on the left, a preacher stands astride the water wearing a cap and gown. Mighty clouds of smoke rise from his mouth and from the book in his hand, symbolizing the breath of God, with which the preacher and his writings are filled. In his left hand he holds the Bible, marked as the New Testament by a cross on the cover. In keeping with the text of Revelation (Rev. 10,11) and Meyer’s interpretation, he holds out the book to a group of people standing in front of him, led by emperor, king and prince. Enveloped in the clouds of smoke emanating from the book, the secular rulers are urged — like the author of Revelation — to “eat up” the Protestant teaching. With his right hand, in a gesture similar to that of the mighty angel, the reformer points to the figure of God, appearing above him in the heavens, thus hinting at his direct relationship to God. Thus the Protestant preacher assumes, like the mighty angel, the role of the mediator sent by God, who transmits the true Christian doctrine to humanity through the Bible.’

given a biblical turn, and Luther had been associated with Moses, Daniel, Paul, and above all Elijah, the prophet of the end time, whose return was expected shortly before the Day of Judgement.⁵⁷

In the figure of the prophet, then, the Reformation was able to take shape as a transmission event, between promise and fulfilment, between the endlessness of biblical interpretation and the finiteness of the apocalyptic horizon, and at the same time it was able to derive its legitimacy and develop its historical potency precisely from the fact that it was a transmission event. This definitely included the material, typographical side. With his existence, Luther lent salvation history a concrete reality, and this reality in turn vouched for the truth of the reformers' approach, with its focus on biblical exegesis. Luther turned the battle of the true believers before the Day of Judgement — a battle predicted in Holy Scripture — into a reality. As biblical exegesis and interpretation of the world came to be equated with each other, it was not only the idea of the antichrist (Luther, as we know, cast the pope in this role) that lost its status as pure reference to the imminent end of the world; instead, all events happened within the horizon of the history of salvation/the Apocalypse.⁵⁸ The prophet thus embodied the emergence of a sense of salvation history, which connected the index of radical 'event-ness' and temporality (which has its roots in the transmission events) with the end of all transmissions, the eternity of divine revelation. This meant that the prophet, in the age of Reformation, was a figure in whom historical events intersected with the contemporary conditions of his knowledge. In the figure of the prophet, located between promise and fulfilment, reality and imagination, different levels of contemporaneous historical reality could be recursively related to each other; he thus became not just a figure through whom transitions between the late Middle Ages and the Reformation could be organized, but one in whom transition itself, the 'in between' and the precarious, acquired a distinctive epochal character. Change did not require reason. Typographical, historical, and theological aspects were linked in a complex of interactions which recreates itself from itself. The Reformation unfolded, in other words, by mediating time.

⁵⁷ Cf., Preuß, *Martin Luther*, esp. pp. 47–58; Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk*, pp. 14–36; Kolb, *Martin Luther as Prophet, Teacher, Hero*, pp. 25–37; Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, for Luther see esp. pp. 36–53. For the history of the influence of the Lutheran prophecies, cf. Sommer, 'Luther – Prophet der Deutschen und der Endzeit'. This is analysed from a secular perspective by Dürr, 'Prophetie und Wunderglauben'.

⁵⁸ Cf. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk*, pp. 148–89; Preuß, *Die Vorstellungen vom Antichrist im späteren Mittelalter*, pp. 83–182; Russell, 'Martin Luther's Understanding of the Pope as the Antichrist'.

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LINGERING: VISIONS OF PAST AND FUTURE IN THE *HYPNEROTOMACHIA POLIPHILI*

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Translated by Jake Fraser

The *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* first appeared in print in 1499, with the Venetian printer and publisher Aldus Manutius. The sponsor of this undertaking, Venetian jurist Leonardo Grassi, dedicated the book to the Duke of Urbino, Guidobaldo di Montefeltre, as a sign of his gratitude. As the reader gleans from the dedication, one of the Grassi brothers had fought under Guidobaldo's command and enjoyed great favour from the Duke (although no further specifications are given about the nature of this favour). The jurist understands this favour afforded his brother, *pars pro toto*, as a proof of friendship on the part of the Duke towards the entire Grassi family; the *Hypnerotomachia* is his return gift. Grassi attests to the Duke's status as a lover of literature and one who scorns worldly wealth; he credits himself for having recognized this tendency in the Duke. As such, he makes the case for the book as an ideal gift, one which corresponds to the actual preferences of its recipient and honours its bestower as an attentive connoisseur. Grassi clearly marks the distinction

* In this essay, I follow Marco Ariani and Mino Gabriele's edition of the *Hypnerotomachia*: Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, ed. by Ariani and Gabriele, I, 2. All quotes from the original are taken from this volume (henceforth *HP*); I've also used the English translation from Joscelyn Godwin: Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili: The Strife of Love in a Dream*, trans. by Godwin. My paraphrases and German translations were made following this text and the Italian translation of Ariani and Gabriele. In the Latin quotes, *v* has been rendered, according to phonetic value, as *u*, & as *et*.

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between this intellectual gift and his brothers' readiness to put life and land on the line for the Duke in their military duties. At the same time, however, he also seems to emphasize the parallels between the two possibilities for showing one's gratitude: he underscores the material-concrete side of the *Hypnerotomachia* and the high costs of its printing, all the while characterizing his editorship as a kind of self-sacrifice. The way in which Grassi stresses the close interrelation between life and literature forms the backdrop for my analysis of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*. After further investigating Grassi's specific method of modelling his addressee as the ideal recipient of his work, I will show that the forms of lingering that emerge¹ out of the *Hypnerotomachia*'s narrative flow are instruments of an interpretative praxis trying to 'get behind' the secret of human life.

My first argument concerns the fact that the role that Grassi has imagined for the Duke is not fulfilled simply by the passivity characteristic of the recipient. Guidobaldo is also addressed as the patron of the *Hypnerotomachia*. Like an orphan, the work requires the direction and care of a sponsor in order to be able to develop. Grassi speaks of a missing 'parent' ('liber iste parente orbatus'), a lack which limits the orphan's possibilities for development. The description here is sufficiently diffuse so as to render unclear whether the 'parent' meant is the author of the *Hypnerotomachia* or Grassi himself, who in the moment of publication hands over his authority as the work's guide and patron. In light of existing scholarship on the work, the reference to the author is suggestive, as the authorship of the *Hypnerotomachia* belongs amongst the most persistent — and yet most stubbornly unanswerable — questions in the secondary literature. Efforts to solve this always circle around the interpretation of the acrostic created by the thirty-eight chapter initials. Attempts to pin down the lover named there ('Franciscus Columna') historically allow one to witness a progression in the secondary literature from a heavily literal fixation on the name to speculations on its creator oriented more towards the work's content. As a whole, however, attributions in the one case as in the other remain speculative.²

¹ The neutrality of the attribution is intentional, for as I intend to show, there are numerous forms of lingering.

² The acrosticon reads: 'POLIAM FRATER FRANCISCUS COLUMNA PERAMAVIT'. As becomes clear in various entries into various copies of the *Hypnerotomachia*, the acrosticon had already been decoded by the beginning of the sixteenth century. The work's concluding remarks refer to location (Treviso) and time (1467) of the work's composition. In the scholarship, there are two competing theses as to the identity of said Francesco Colonna. One identifies him with the Venetian Dominican father Francesco Colonna, and this of all things on the basis of a notice in a lost copy of the *Hypnerotomachia* from 1512, although it does not bring the Father into any direct connection with the *Hypnerotomachia*. The other one understands

Insofar as this uncertain authorship provides the background against which Grassi suggests to the Duke that his name should stand in for the book ('in cuius nomen audaculus prodiret'), the book's sponsor and patron is brought into the vicinity of a creator whose work is anything but unproblematic. For although it is formulated in a gesture of admiration for the writer of the *Hypnerotomachia*, the dedication also offers a first taste of the difficulties confronting its readers. Grassi refers to the work's unusual use of language, justifying it with what initially appears to be a rather strange argument: he claims that the textual construct, composed of a mixture of Latin and vernacular language (and moreover requiring knowledge of Greek), is in fact a pre-emptive strike on the part of its author. Its purpose: to ward off the accusation from uncharitable critics that the author had been lacking in diligence during the work's composition.³ What remains unclear in this argument is why of all things philological obstacles to understanding the book should convince its critics of the diligence invested in it by its author. At this point, Grassi opens himself up to the suspicion that the emphasis he places upon apologetics implicitly serves as an appeal for the charitable reception of the *Hypnerotomachia* — an appeal which could not have been made explicitly without discrediting the work in advance.

The second reason Grassi provides for the verbal form of the *Hypnerotomachia* attributes to its author a deliberate selection of readers — namely, those meant to enjoy the innermost core of his doctrine. These are the most educated amongst the recipients, those equal to the work's demanding language. Grassi suggests, with reference to the book's figures, images, and agreeable narrative form, that the less educated amongst its readers are offered an aesthetic enjoyment — one which compensates for the book's partial inaccessibility and ultimately makes even its complex lessons comprehensible.⁴ Missing

him to be a Roman nobleman from the house of Colonna. Additional unproven theories link the author to Lorenzo de' Medici and even Leon Battista Alberti. See on this *HP*, II, pp. lxiii–xc as well as Schmidt, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 17–18. A comprehensive study of the presumed biographical background of Colonna is offered in Casella and Pozzi, *Francesco Colonna: Biografia e opere*. A critical response to this: *HP*, II, pp. lxxv–lxxi; also: Calvesi, *La 'Pugna d'amore in sogno'*. Ariani and Gabriele (*HP*, II, 495, n. 3) have referred the question of authorship to an additional text. In connection with the dedicatory and introductory portions of the novel, one finds both immediately before and after the actual novel a dispute (attributed to the Latin poet Andrea Marone) between an I and the muse about who is hiding behind the name Poliphilo. Ariani and Gabriele interpret the muse's answer *Nolumus agnosci* as an anagram for *Columna gnosius*.

³ *HP*, I, 2.

⁴ Grassi's reference to figures (*figurae*) and images (*imagines*), can refer to the verbal constitution of the *Hypnerotomachia* just as well as to its pictorial side; see on this *HP*, II, 491, n. 18.

from the circle of the book's addressees are the common people ('non hic res sunt vulgo expositae'). This has its reasons: the *Hypnerotomachia*, nourished by the secret springs of philosophy⁵ and poetry⁶ and clothed in novel language, requires for an adequate reception the minds of exceptional men. The 'mastermind' amongst the worthy, as Grassi makes clear at the conclusion, is the Duke of Urbino. In addition to his role as the *Hypnerotomachia*'s virtual co-author, the Duke is also charged with serving as a custodian for the work's completeness and as its exemplary reader.⁷

Leonardo Grassi's dedication, a mixture of topoi typical of dedications and engaged apologetics, testifies to an infallible consciousness of the sensitive points of the *Hypnerotomachia*. And, in light of the work's early reception history, it also testifies to a certain foresight as well as a provisionally unsuccessful attempt at rescue. It almost seems as if Grassi had suspected that ten years after the publication of the book, he would only have managed to sell a small fragment of the print run.⁸ Unfortunately, far from playing the role that Grassi had envisioned for them, several prominent figures from that guild of scholars which he had addressed in the preface as both competent and privileged recipients emerged as mockers and critics of the work.⁹ As Grassi had anticipated, the primary cause for their dissatisfaction lay in the text's hermetic verbal form. Proof of this comes in the success of the work's first translation into French, fifty years later — a translation which viewed neither fidelity to its predecessor nor completeness as its first or most important goals.¹⁰ In addition, the 172

⁵ On the problem of the translation of *ex penu philosophiae*, see *HP*, II, 491, n. 20.

⁶ In the present context, poetry is to be understood as part of the *ars rhetorica*; see see *HP*, II, 492, n. 21.

⁷ At the end of his preface, Grassi hopes to achieve from his plea for a friendly reception protection from censorship: 'nulla censura formidabit'; *HP*, I, 2. He also hopes to avoid having the book fall into oblivion, through acquiring a broad readership that follows Guidobaldo's example: 'frequentius ab aliis legetur, qui a te lectus purabitur'; *HP*, I, 3.

⁸ Casella and Pozzi, *Francesco Colonna: Biografia e opere*, I, 153, doc. 140; see also the reference in Schmidt, *Untersuchungen*, p. 147, n. 14, as well as p. 101. Grassi, apparently confronted with the publishing house's plans for a second edition of the *Hypnerotomachia*, requests from the Council of Ten in Venice an extension of his privileges. He justifies the pathetic number of sales — in total, four copies — with the confusion wrought by recent wars: 'per li tempi et disturbi de guerra sono state, non habi potuto quelli mandar fuora [...] immo quelli quasi tuti anchor habi [...] per tanto supplica et de gratia special domanda, che li sia prorogato el tempo de altri X anni [...]'.⁹

⁹ Schmidt, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 12–13.

¹⁰ Schmidt, *Untersuchungen*, p. 13.

woodcuttings of the *Hypnerotomachia* lent the work a pictorial dimension that enjoyed a broad reception, coming into contact with some of the best-known names of Venetian painting.¹¹ Albrecht Dürer, one of the few buyers of the first edition, can be assumed to have been primarily interested in the illustrations.¹² The obvious difficulties that the public had with the text are doubly apparent when set against the backdrop of the positive reception of the images.

As if he had anticipated this as well, Grassi's implicit evaluation of the future effects of the *Hypnerotomachia*'s difficult language are linked to his simultaneous insistence upon the meaning of the letter and the act of reading. He appears unwilling to sacrifice this insistence, despite an apparently much more favourable reception of the images.¹³ What becomes clear here is that for Grassi, the word functions as the crystallization point of a unique system of knowledge, the combination of old and new, whose further transmission and productive effects are important to Grassi.¹⁴

The *Hypnerotomachia* tells in two books the story of the dreaming lover Poliphilo and his quest for his unobtainable beloved, Polia. Told initially from Poliphilo's perspective, he follows Polia through unknown landscapes, past ruins from antiquity and fantastic architectonic structures. His journey, undertaken both alone and in the company of nymphs, finally ends in the Temple of Venus, where Poliphilo is joined to Polia and then united with her on the island of Kythira. Kythira is also the setting in which Polia, responding to a request from the nymphs, tells of her own fate and offers her perspective on the events with Poliphilo. This is where the second book begins, still within the framework of Poliphilo's dream. A question from the priestess of Venus about

¹¹ Most attributions have today been disproven. One exception is Benedetto Bordon, who is held to be the creator of some of the woodcuts. See on this Oechslin, 'Traum, Liebe, Kampf'.

¹² Casella and Pozzi, *Francesco Colonna: Biografia e opere*, I, 97–101 on the entry showing Dürer's possession in the copy possessed by the Staatsbibliothek München, and on the reception of the woodcuts. On the reception of the images, as well as a partially critical response to Casella and Pozzi, see Schmidt, *Untersuchungen*, p. 147, n. 15.

¹³ On this, see the remarks above on Grassi's sketches of distinct circles of reception, which were to make use of the different medial forms of the *Hypnerotomachia* — whereby it was recommended to the less-educated that they stick closely to the images.

¹⁴ This is revealed for example in the fact, mentioned earlier, that Grassi gives as one of his reasons for presenting the *Hypnerotomachia* to the Duke the latter's status as a 'Man of the Letter'. As such, the book could serve him as companion in an ongoing process of learning: '[...] sic tu ad studia et multiplicem doctrinam tuam socio saepe uteris [...]'; *HP*, I, 2. Grassi makes reference to the knowledge of the Ancients, which is alive in the *Hypnerotomachia*, but also speaks of it as a *novum opus*; see *HP*, I, 2.

Poliphilo's history provides the basis for a further narration within the narration. A final embrace between the lovers concludes Polia's report, and she disappears soon after. Finally, Poliphilo awakens from his dream.¹⁵

Grassi writes to Guidobaldo that after reading the *Hypnerotomachia*, it will seem to him as if he now possessed not only the knowledge of all the books of antiquity's scholars, but also knowledge of the secrets of nature itself.¹⁶ Even the title of the *Hypnerotomachia* refers to the knowledge that it collects: the author suggests that this knowledge stands in an additive (read: concessive) relationship with respect to the dream-like nothingness of all human affairs. The actualization of this knowledge is demonstrated to be an achievement of memory: 'Hypnerotomachia Poliphili, ubi humana omnia non nisi somnium esse docet, atque obiter plurima scitu sane quam digna commemorat' (The strife of love in Poliphilo's dream, in which he teaches that everything human is nothing but a dream, but at the same time reminds the reader of much knowledge of great worth).¹⁷

That which can be known is present in both title and dedication as a particular kind of entity — one located between fact as a type of already sanctioned knowledge and fiction (in the sense of something novel, unreliable and in need of interpretation). Alongside the self-conscious confirmation of the relevance of *scientia*, the *Hypnerotomachia* also contains the remark that reading of the text only makes possible the illusion of comprehensive knowledge. Put differently: the dream — clearly marked in its deficiency¹⁸ — becomes the unreliable frame within which all statements are subjected to a certain relativization.

Against this background, one could argue that an increase in knowledge deriving from the *Hypnerotomachia* is not to be had without interpretation. As such, it becomes precarious to the extent that interpretation always involves a certain degree of flexibility. However, for exemplary readers like Guidobaldo, who possess adequate receptive capacities, the potential profit they can draw from their readings is virtually existential — comparable to the gift of one's own life, and correspondingly invaluable.¹⁹ As stated above, the task of the fol-

¹⁵ See also the overview of the work's contents in Godwin (Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, trans. by Godwin), p. xviii.

¹⁶ *HP*, I, 2: 'tanta est enim in eo non modo scientia, sed copia, ut cum hunc videris, non magis omnes veterum libros, quam naturae ipsius occultas res vidisse videaris.'

¹⁷ *HP*, I, 1.

¹⁸ 'Non nisi somnium': human things are 'nothing but a dream'.

¹⁹ See above the parallel Grassi draws between his brothers' readiness to give their lives for the Duke and his own manner of self-sacrifice by means of the *Hypnerotomachia*.

lowing, then, is to reflect on the connection between textual interpretation and techniques for the creation of meaning — already suggested in the work's title and dedication — with respect to human life. My thesis is that the praxis of lingering is determined to invest life with meaning, even when this means going against the grain of life's anticipated insignificance.²⁰

A central factor in this is that what crystallizes in lingering is a very particular relationship between '(individual) life' and 'history'. As simultaneously individual and universal categories, human life and the love story between Poliphilo and Polia are thematically linked in a number of ways. In his eulogy of Grassi located in the preface to the *Hypnerotomachia*, the Feltrini poet and scholar Giovanni Battista Scita claims that the work 'contains everything rare and noble living in the world'.²¹ The book is dedicated to the beloved, said to have formed and painted the book in her lover's heart and then signed it with her image.²² Its mysteriousness produces a specific form of allegorical interpretation, in which meanings are not so much traded for symbols as history is instrumentalized as a medium for the creation of meaning. My assumption is that this takes place first and foremost through the description and interpretive ordering of intact and ruined architecture (the latter in particular); both

²⁰ The *Hypnerotomachia* is framed by two motifs of *vanitas*. I have already discussed the title of the book and the dreamlike transience of all human things. The *Hypnerotomachia* concludes with an epitaph for the dead Polia. See in this context Vogl, *On Tarrying*, p. 18, who recognizes in the behaviour of tarrying 'the active gesture of inquiry, in which the work, the action, the execution is comprehended not from the perspective of its enforcement but in the process of its emergence and becoming'. This may also hold as a general frame for the gesture of lingering as well, which is here to be understood as above all a dynamic gesture — even when it also carries connotations of stagnation. In this case, as the transition from Poliphilo's first dream to his second will show, the dynamism plays a role on a structural level, insofar as the characteristics of lingering require one to formulate questions anew. Giorgio Agamben also speaks of the impression of *festina lente* when reading the *Hypnerotomachia*. He traces it back to a play with lexical and syntactical-grammatical elements, a play between Latin and the vernacular language. See Agamben, 'The Dream of Language', pp. 46–47. He interprets Polia as the figuration of the Latin language, loved by Poliphilo, who as the figuration of the vernacular language has distanced himself from her.

²¹ In the Manutius edition, the eulogy follows Grassi's dedication to Guidobaldo, *HP*, 1, 3: '[...] quicquid dat in orbe vita toto/ Rarum et nobile [...]']

²² See *HP*, 1, 10, '[...] questo munuscolo [i]l quale tu industriosamente, nel amoroso core cum dorate sagitte in quello depincto, et cum la tua angelica effigie insignito et fabricato hai [...]'] ([...] this small gift, which you have industriously fashioned with golden arrows in this loving heart and painted and signed with your own angelic image [...]) (p. 8). This point will be developed more clearly in what follows.

emerge as sites where the work's observation often lingers. The nature of this lingering shows how time is mediated in ruins and how history manifests in the relation between past and future.²³

Labyrinth and Dream

The gesture of lingering begins to play a role in the text as early as those passages which follow Grassi's dedication but precede the actual novel. There, a reception community is addressed which is no longer limited to Guidobaldo. Before the narration of the dream can begin, an anonymous voice addresses itself to its readership, first in a Latin elegy²⁴ and then in Italian prose. This address is (particularly in the case of the elegy) a combination of seduction of and instruction for the reader, coupled with a summary of the work's contents. Its author sketches out the spectrum of the *Hypnerotomachia's* immense diversity, at the level of both form and content. This sketch allows a so-inclined reader to operate selectively, pursuing his own interests and preferences. Those either too serious or too sullen to appreciate love stories can take pleasure in the order of the narration. Those who reject this latter are offered instead style and language; those who refuse themselves even this pleasure may still concentrate on the geometry (*geometrica*) and ancient things rich in Egyptian signs ('vetusta [...] niliacis referta notis').²⁵ The list-like movement through the contents of the *Hypnerotomachia* that follows is geared toward the latter two points, whereby it remains the case that — despite the offer made to the readers to maintain a certain distance from it — the novel is closely bound up with the love story at its centre. Human and divine protagonists are enumerated along their (occasionally geometrically specified) realms of influence; these realms are then given a location in the space of the book through the repeated use of the deictic adverbs *hic* and *hinc*:

Hic sunt pyramides thermae, ingentesque colossi/ [...]. Et capita atque trabes, et cum quadrante coronae/ Symmetria [...]./ Hic templum est ingens omni perfectius arte/ Sacrorum ritus multiplices veterum./ [...] Hinc hortis, pratisque vide distincta cythaera,/ In cuius medio curva theatra patent./ Hicque Cupidineum poteris spectare triumphum.²⁶

²³ On this see Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft*, p. 12.

²⁴ Ariani and Gabriele agree with Casella and Pozzi in their assessment that the elegy comes from the author of the *Hypnerotomachia*, see *HP*, II, 493, n. 5.

²⁵ *HP*, I, 3.

²⁶ *HP*, I, 4.

(Here are pyramids, baths and vast colossi [...]. Capital and beam, the square symmetry/ Of the cornice [...]./ Here is the vast temple, the perfection of all art,/ The many rituals of the ancients' worship. [...] See here Cythera, divided into gardens and meadows,/ In whose centre a round theatre appears,/ Where you will be able to watch Cupid's triumph [...].)

The quintessence of the representable, the 'tota vita hominum' (totality of human life) finds a spatial expression in the *Hypnerotomachia*: it acquires blurry contours in 'labyrintheis tenebris' (dark labyrinths).²⁷ This labyrinth-like spatiality sustains a relation to the dream at the level of structure and motif; the dream had already been attributed, in the work's very title, the same reference to the human in its totality ('humana omnia non nisi somnium'). What is more, the dream has in 'memorable knowledge' a foil for comparison, whose function with respect to the labyrinth is that of the catalogue-like survey of the work's content. In both cases, the demand for factual clarity, even verifiability, is countered by the threat of a certain susceptibility to the vague, the murky and the contingent. In this regard, the reference to dream and labyrinth is also a push towards an allegorizing exegesis, embedded as it is within the context of a reception imperative oriented towards the visible, the hearable, and the readable.²⁸

The movement of the *Hypnerotomachia*'s reader is thus, in accordance with the elegy, the movement of one who attempts to orient himself in the labyrinth of the text (itself a representation of human life): a continual

²⁷ *HP*, I, 4: '[...] expressaque tota/ In labyrintheis vita hominum tenebris/ [...].'

²⁸ The recipients, addressed in the singular in the elegy, are repeatedly enjoined to listen (*ascultes*), to look (*vide, ecce*), and to read (*lege*). — On this see also Ariani and Gabriele in *HP*, II, 494, n. 1, who, on the basis of the contrast between the list of contents and the mention of the labyrinth, speak of an 'exegetical punchline'. They understand the passage as the authorization of an allegorical reading, which brings light into the darkness of the labyrinth. What is more, the significance of allegorical interpretation is linked in the text to the love story between Poliphilo and Polia. Ariani and Gabriele (*HP*, II, 489–500, n. 1) proceed from the assumption that with the epitaph to the dead Polia at the conclusion of the framing texts, and the *Hypnerotomachia*'s dedication to the living one at the beginning, what is being made clear is that the entire fiction is based upon this distinction between historical and symbolic registers. Models for this are Dante und Petrarca. Polia, we read in the epitaph, lives better now that she is dead ('Polia, quae vivis mortua, sed melius), namely, in Poliphilo's words: 'Tedium Poliphilo somno iacet obrutus alto,/ Pervigilare facit docta per ora virum' (*HP*, I, 8). And these words, whose author ultimately turns out to be Polia herself, are dedicated to her at the beginning of the fiction as a living person. To be shown here is that what is at stake in the *Hypnerotomachia* is not merely the distinction between a historical and a symbolic register but rather a new form of allegorical interpretation.

change in direction and at the same time a lingering in a circumscribed space. It is thus in equal parts teleological, directed towards the release involved in exiting out of the maze or finding its centre, as well as (with respect to the spaces already covered) potentially circular, repetitive, and misleading.²⁹ The dynamic of reception suggested by the elegy shares these properties with the dream movement of the sleeping Poliphilo. Poliphilo knows neither where his 'strife of love within a dream' will lead him, nor what awaits him around the next bend. Nonetheless, however, he must always struggle to make sense of the things and events that confront him. His first somnambulant steps lead him into a thick forest, where he promptly loses his way. In the impenetrability of the thicket ('in questo [...] invio bosco'),³⁰ which Poliphilo immediately compares with the labyrinth of the Minotaur,³¹ all actions are characterized by their lack of direction. Even his lamenting sighs miss their mark, and are instead thrown back by Echo.³² Between fearful hesitation and anxious hurrying forward, every impulse congeals into a crippling indecisiveness.³³ This indecisiveness then spreads over Poliphilo's thoughts as well, compelling them towards a single object, the unknown potential horrors and dangers to his life.³⁴ Poliphilo's thoughts, however, do not first become obsessive in the dream. The depiction of Poliphilo in the sleepless hours which precede the dream show him to be a brooder, tormenting himself as he continues to agonize over the same object: his unrequited love for Polia. Like the affects it produces, so too Poliphilo's

²⁹ The address of the reader in prose *volgare* takes up both the motif of the labyrinth and the list-like form of the summary of the work's contents, but as a whole, it distinguishes itself from the elegy in focusing on the fact that Poliphilo is the subject of the experience and the narration. See *HP*, p. 5

³⁰ Poliphilo here speaks literally of the 'pathlessness of the forest' (*HP*, I, 15)

³¹ *HP*, I, 15: 'Solamente della Pietosa Ariadne cretea desiderava el soccorso [...] per fora uscire del discolo labyrintho' (I prayed to the blessed Ariadne of Crete [...] that she might likewise deliver me from this dark forest).

³² *HP*, I, 15. What is meant is the mythical Echo.

³³ *HP*, I, 14–15 speaks of 'sospesi et disordinati passi' (interrupted and disordered steps), of 'indi et quindi discorrendo' (rambling hither and thither).

³⁴ *HP*, I, 15: 'Non sapendo hoggi mai que me fare, solamente ad terribili pensieri ligata et intenta teneva la mente mia. [...] Offuscare gia principiato havendo el mio intellecto, de non potere cognoscere, et nubilare gli sentimenti, quale optione eligere dovesse [...]. [...] quasi senza speranza la mente dogni parte conturbava' (My mind, having no idea of what to do, was bound and obsessed by terrifying thoughts. [...] Obscurity was already invading my mind, and clouds enveloping my senses, so that I did not know which choice to make [...]. [...] nearly hopeless, I tormented my mind in every conceivable way. (p. 15, trans modified).

laborious worrying has no real point of reference, no goal or end, and thus tends towards a 'rumination' or 'chewing over' unable to find a satisfactory resting point.³⁵ Even when Poliphilo finally finds sleep, his mind is unable to share in his body's relaxation, and the aimless thoughts which made his waking state so agonizing intrude into his dream world as well.³⁶

With his exit out of the woods, Poliphilo appears to have found a provisional direction for his further actions: to quench his unbearable thirst. But when the dream presents him with everything he desires — a clearing, a spring, fresh water — he allows himself to be distracted at the last moment by a harmonious, heavenly, ineffably sweet song, pleasing his heart and capturing his desire.³⁷ The original activity is interrupted, deferred, and for a time replaced by another, which again gives the protagonist a goal and again leads him astray. For the source of the music, which Poliphilo believes himself to be hurrying towards, eludes him whenever he nears it. The longer his senseless efforts to find it last, the more he is reminded of his bodily exhaustion and his thirst. Yet now there is no water in sight, and Poliphilo, instead of having found satisfaction for his desires, is confronted with their multiplication and contradictions.³⁸ Fully exhausted, he lies down under an oak tree, where he quarrels with fate³⁹ and ultimately comes

³⁵ *HP*, I, 12: '[...] di puncto in puncto ricogitava, che cosa e inaequale amore. [...] Et cu[m] quale protectione da musitati et crebri congressi assediata [...] la fluctuante anima [...] possi tanto inerme resistere [...] irretita di solliciti, instabili et novi pensieri. De cusi facto et tale misero stato, havendome per longo tracto amaramente doluto, et gia fessi gli vaghi spiriti de pensare i[n] utilmente [...]. Cogitabondo et la qualitate degli miselli amatori [...]' ([...] thinking over point by point the nature of unmatched affection. [...] What protection can the unquiet soul have when it is unarmed, yet assailed with many a surprise attack and surrounded by hostile forces, especially when the battle takes place within it, and it is hampered by novel, unstable and insistent thoughts? I bewailed long and bitterly this miserable state of mine; my unsettled spirits were already weary of futile thought [...]. I brooded on the state of those wretched lovers [...]; p. 12). On the bedroom as a site for reflection, vision and the torments of love, see *HP*, II, 511–12, n. 1.

³⁶ *HP*, I, 12: 'Fue invasa et quella parte occupata et da uno dolce somno opressa, laquale cum la mente et cum gli amanti et pervigili spiriti non sta unita ne partecipe ad si alte operatione' (A gentle sleep invaded and occupied that part of me that is not united with my mind and with my loving and vigilant spirits, and cannot participate in their lofty operations).

³⁷ On the motif of thirst for love and music as a comfort for the lovesick, see *HP*, II, 534, n. 4 and pp. 537–538, n. 4.

³⁸ *HP*, I, 18: 'Per le quale tutte cose, io stetti cum lanimo intricato de ambiguitate, et molto trapensoso' (All this left me with baffling contradictions, which I turned over and over in my mind).

³⁹ *HP*, I, 19: 'scrupolosamente nell animo discorreva, degli litii intricatissimi della inferna fortuna' (my mind ran minutely over the intricate weavings of infernal Fortune).

to interpret his situation as the 'cruel postponement of a welcome death'.⁴⁰ It is in this state — which culminates in Poliphilo falling into a mindless indifference — that he falls asleep again, this time within his dream.⁴¹

The graduated model applied in the *Hypnerotomachia* to the sleep and dreams of Poliphilo follows in a long tradition of dream interpretation and classification. Of particular significance for this tradition is Macrobius, a key figure for the conception of dreams in the Middle Ages.⁴² In his theory, the intensity of sleep and the visionary quality of the dreams which accompany this intensity play decisive roles.⁴³ A light sleep corresponds to nightmares (*insomnia*). These remain limited strictly to one's experiences in a waking state, and thus possess no meaning for the prediction of the future.⁴⁴ One of Macrobius's examples is the distress of the lover, persecuted by uncertainties about the feelings of his beloved and spurred to bad dreams. Opposed to this are *somnia*, mysterious dream images, which bear truth about the future but require interpretation. They emerge in deep sleep.⁴⁵ Following this schema, the transition from the first to the second sleep in the *Hypnerotomachia* can be understood as a change in the quality of sleep. It is described, with exactly the same participial construction, first as sweet ('quella parte [...] da uno dolce somno opressa') and then as deep ('fui di eminente somno opresso').⁴⁶ The horrible visions of the first stage disappear almost as soon as Poliphilo falls asleep for the second time; subsequently, his attention is captured by wondrous objects that both astonish him and demand his interpretation. According to Macrobius, it is only now that one is dealing with a meaning that bears

⁴⁰ *HP*, I, 19: 'Ma che cosa e? Senon uno maligno differire dicio la optata morte?'

⁴¹ *HP*, I, 19: '[...] fui di eminente somno opresso et [...] iterum mi parve de dormire'.

⁴² On this, see Hüttig, *Macrobius im Mittelalter*; Schedler, *Die Philosophie des Macrobius*; Probst and Wetz, 'Traum'.

⁴³ On the 'epistemological and physiological' inseparability of dream and vision in the 'history of culture and mentalities', see: Reck, 'Traum', p. 171.

⁴⁴ See Ussani, *Insomnia*, pp. 118ff.

⁴⁵ Macrobius, *Macrobii Ambrosii Theodosii Commentariorum*, ed. by Scarpa, 1.3.3–11 as well as Ussani, *Insomnia*, p. 125ff.

⁴⁶ See above nn. 38 and 43. Ariani and Gabriele (*HP*, II, 519, n. 13 as well as p. 545, n. 14) presume that the *Hypnerotomachia* consists of three components deriving from the visionary quality of the dream. From the *incipit* up until the moment where Poliphilo falls asleep again, from the second dozing off to the beginning of the second book, and from here until the end of the novel, where the vision supports an intimate relationship to death, thereby experiencing its highest potentiation.

relevance to the future — a meaning that lies behind the appearances and is accessible through interpretation.

The Macrobian distinctions are doubtless important for an understanding of the *Hypnerotomachia*; the work's engagement with tradition justifies a reading which takes them into account. However, within the horizon of remarks on the reception situation, the framing components of the text, and the depiction of the first dream, these distinctions cannot be fully satisfying. The striking proximity of meta-narrative and narrative components at the beginning of the *Hypnerotomachia*, at the level of both motif and argument, suggests that passages should be compared not just on the basis of content but also according to structural criteria. From this perspective, the novel's beginning could be better understood not as interest in the truth content of dreams, but rather as an interest in the troubles and pitfalls of textual interpretation. The exploration of the labyrinth of human life is, on this account, thrown back upon the dynamic of circling, obsessive and occasionally hopeless lingering — a lingering which insists upon possible meanings for the apparently meaningless. Put otherwise: as long as insight into the general obscurity and wrong turns of human life is at stake, then interpretation appears as temporal, appears to persist, in a kind of lingering petrification, in the now. Of central importance in this constellation is the coincidence of three components: the object of interpretation (the labyrinthine darkness of human life), the method of interpretation (insistent lingering), and a temporal implication (orientation towards the present).

With respect to Macrobius, one has to consider against this background that questions about Poliphilo's second dream have to be formulated differently than this tradition would suggest. Supposing — and this is also implied by Macrobius's division⁴⁷ — that the focus of the second dream narration is also on the difficulties of interpretive techniques (i.e., the specific problem that this second narration inherits from the first), then the constellation for the second dream must be thought anew. The first dream, one could say, unfolds the conditions of the failure of interpretation — and the accompanying attribution of meaning — along the example of human life. The question is whether the second dream depicts this interpretation's success.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ See above Macrobius's characterization of the *somnium* as a dream, which contains meaning but must be interpreted.

⁴⁸ This question also arises with respect to the success of the *Hypnerotomachia*'s reception, insofar as the latter, as described, is linked motivically to the first dream, and shares with it the characteristics of lingering. In her study of the text, Olimpia Pelosi focuses on the dreamworld as a particular kind of space. Here, what counts is not so much reason (as means of interpreta-

Ruins

In his descent into slumber, Poliphilo escapes the dark forest and is placed into a cheerful hilly region, covered with all manner of plants. A walk leads him to the edge of a valley between two high mountains. In the valley, he spots a tower and a building ('una grande fabrica'), which he identifies from the distance as antique structures ('opera et structura antiquaria'). Driven by a suspicion of the significance of what he has seen, Poliphilo hurries toward them ('la quale cosa de intuito accertamente existimando dignissima').⁴⁹ The closer he comes, the larger the construct appears to him, and his desire to admire it grows accordingly ('di mirarla multiplicantise el disio').⁵⁰ Finally, it reveals itself to be an enormous obelisk, built upon a powerful, pyramid-like block of stone ('una vasta congerie di petre').⁵¹

Poliphilo's wish is not merely to see the object, whose form gradually reveals itself to him as he approaches, but rather to admire it, is somewhat remarkable. Admittedly, the actual introduction of astonished admiration is reserved for the moment in which the structure stands before the eyes of the observer in the full force of its enormity. However, that the probable (aesthetic) effect of the object prefigures its actual effect means that an element of calculability has been carried into the perception of the recipient, lending his attitude towards the object an interpretive air. Put otherwise: the typically contingent aesthetic effect of admiring astonishment is deployed in such a way as to make the following observation and description of classical architecture into an exegetical⁵²-aesthetic activity.⁵³

This is to be kept in mind as I examine, in what follows, two architectural ekphrases, narrated from Poliphilo's point of view and placed at either end of the second dream narration. We have on the one hand a description of the pyra-

tion?) as one's participation in the symbols that one encounters. See Pelosi, *Il sogno di Polifilo*, p. 19. It is not entirely clear what this participation consists in.

⁴⁹ *HP*, I, 22.

⁵⁰ *HP*, I, 22. Here I am following the translation in *HP*, II, 27: '[...] la bramosia di ammirarla [la costruzione] andava crescendo [...]']

⁵¹ *HP*, I, 22. A translation with 'pile of stones' would be more appropriate here. The reader only discovers at a later spot that this reference is not to a pile of boulders, but instead to a pyramid.

⁵² 'Exegetical' is here meant 'neutrally', in the sense of 'interpreting'.

⁵³ This assumption is confirmed many times over even in the verbs used to describe Poliphilo's approach to the structure; on this, see the following.

mid with an obelisk, mentioned above; on the other, the depiction of Poliphilo's visit to the temple of the unhappy lovers. Of particular interest in their relation to one another is the prominence of the representation of ruins. The appearance of ruins at two key spots in the text appears to thwart in advance an interpretive attribution of meaning. Instead, they seem to repeat the framing of the *Hypnerotomachia* with motifs of *vanitas*, whereby the general transience and insignificance of all things is confirmed.⁵⁴

In her work on the architectural ekphrases of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, Dorothea Schmidt has emphasized the erratic and anomalous status of these passages.⁵⁵ Overloaded with information that serves no other purpose than to demonstrate the learnedness of the work's author, these extensive descriptions of structures are — according to Schmidt — mysterious above all because they represent stations on Poliphilo's 'path of initiation', but are in no way 'incorporated' into the 'meaning' of this path through 'allegorization'.⁵⁶ The question raised at least implicitly by Schmidt — that of the narrative function of the ekphrases — will be taken up here in the context of the main theses of the preceding investigation. This is of particular significance, as scholarship has until now carefully avoided answering this question, concentrating instead on the knowledge of architectural theory possessed by the work's author.⁵⁷

Poliphilo's examination of pyramid and obelisk takes its time. Observing, marvelling, discovering, deliberating, and reflecting, his tactile, curious gaze moves from detail to detail. Poliphilo walks upon the pyramid, lingers with its material, its proportions, the decorative elements, the incorporation of the entire construct into the surrounding landscape, and then attempts to imagine the amount of labour power, the costs, organization and wealth of insight that its construction required.⁵⁸ His attention is centred upon the immense size of the structure and the difficulty he has grasping it with his senses and describing it.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ On ruins as a motif of *vanitas*, see, for example, Frenzel, 'Ruine'.

⁵⁵ Schmidt is primarily interested in the Temple of Venus, which is not the object of my concern here, as ruins play no particular role in its description.

⁵⁶ Schmidt, *Untersuchungen*, p. 15. What is meant is the initiation into the Venus cult, which reaches its high point in the Temple of Venus.

⁵⁷ This is shown in exemplary fashion in Borsi, *Polifilio Architetto*; cf. also Oechslin, 'Traum. Liebe, Kampf', and, with a broader sense of 'architecture', Kretzulesco-Quaranta: *Les jardins du songe*, on the influence of the *Hypnerotomachia* on European gardens.

⁵⁸ *HP*, I, 22–30.

⁵⁹ See for example *HP*, I, 23: 'la quale [cosa] [...] mirando non mediocrementemente la potentia

The (admittedly nonetheless successful) time and effort put into its depiction appears primarily intended to demonstrate the essential incomparability of this 'bold example of architectonic art',⁶⁰ beginning with its dimensions. Its height exceeds that of Olympus, the Caucasus and the lofty mountain Cyllene on the Peloponnese.⁶¹ Neither the baths of Hadrian, nor the obelisks of the Vatican, of Alexandria or of Babylon, we read, neither the Labyrinth at Lemnos nor the Mausoleum of Ninos compare to it. Neither the boldness of the Egyptians nor that of Dimokrates, who wanted to build Alexander the Great a city on the mountain Athos, were capable of such invention.⁶² No epoch has ever seen or even conceived of something similar.⁶³

Poliphilo's expression of his excitement in the face of the sheer perfection of the building is accompanied both by a *laudatio temporis acti* as well as a tendency towards a lament characterized by culture-pessimism.⁶⁴ The artists of antiquity are described as 'sacred Fathers' ('sancti parti antiqui artificii') and accused of having taken all virtue and skill into the grave with them, leaving nothing behind for the 'moderns'.⁶⁵ These latter followed neither the law of symmetry nor that of proportion, but nonetheless boasted that they were architects.⁶⁶ His own inability to capture in words the beauty and sublimity of what he has seen leads Poliphilo back to the loss of architectonic terminology in the present. This terminology, he says, disappeared along with the worthy masters of architecture.⁶⁷ And finally, architecture is praised as the most

visiva affaticava, et gli altri spirituali sensi attenuando' (the very sight of [...] it greatly tired my eyes and diluted the spirits of my other senses).

⁶⁰ HP, I, 22: '[...] tanta insolentia di arte aedificatoria [...]'].

⁶¹ HP, I, 22: 'Latitudine dellaquale [...] excedeva la summitate de gli collateranei monti, quantunque fusse stato el celebremonte arbitrava Olympo, Caucaso et Cylleno' ('The height of this obelisk far exceeded the summits of the flanking mountains, and would have, so I thought, even if they had been famous Olympus, the Caucasus, or Mount Cyllene').

⁶² HP, I, 25, 30.

⁶³ HP, I, 30: 'Ne unque in alcuno saeculo, ne viso, ne excogitato tale'.

⁶⁴ As, for example, the remark that scenes of remarkable craftsmanship, inconceivable today, had been carved into the circle of a number of column drums; HP, I, 23: '[...] Indicando la sua excellentia, che sencia fallire ad gli tempi nostri [...]'].

⁶⁵ HP, I, 42.

⁶⁶ HP, I, 42–43.

⁶⁷ If one takes into consideration the fact that the author hews closely to Alberti, one can assume that he had excepted himself from this proclamation. On the particulars, see HP, II, 547ff.

noble creation of the Roman Empire, and its downfall through ignorance and barbarism lamented.⁶⁸

In the face of such hypostasizations of the past, which the text's protagonist dreams in its perfection, Hanno-Walter Kruft has spoken of a 'backwards-facing utopia'. He understands this aspect as the central innovation in the sensibility for architecture which the *Hypnerotomachia* establishes at the end of the fifteenth century.⁶⁹ An eye for the totality, a 'megalomaniacal need' on the part of the author, paired with 'antiquarian learnedness' finds, on this account, an equivalent in Poliphilo's affective bedazzlement.⁷⁰ In what follows, I would like to take up Kruft's thoughts on the potential of the architectural representations for a backwards-facing utopia, while at the same time modifying them, extending them, and carrying them beyond the aesthetic dimension to relate them to the narrative function of the ekphrases. This means that one must also ask more precisely how such a utopia would come into existence, as well what its actual object is.

From the beginning, ruins play a central role in the work's description of the ancient structure's uniqueness.⁷¹ In one of the first depictions, Poliphilo's astonishment is motivated by the contrast between the fragmentation of the structure on the one hand and its massive size on the other.⁷² Many elements are only partially destroyed; others are reduced to their material, formless rubble overgrown with plants, allowing no inference back to their former state.⁷³ In those places where the architecture remains intact to the extent that the original aim can be guessed, a space opens up for the imagination of the observer.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ *HP*, I, 31.

⁶⁹ Kruft, *Geschichte der Architektur-Theorie*, p. 68.

⁷⁰ Kruft, *Geschichte der Architektur-Theorie*, p. 68. On Poliphilo's affective breakdown, see his declaration that he had sighed while sobbing as a result of the emotional turmoil brought about by the structure: '[...] di subito excitato caldamente singultando sospirava.'

⁷¹ Although the *Hypnerotomachia* is a favorite reference for research on ruins, scholars have rarely asked about their function for the narration as a whole. Forero-Mendoza makes a few steps in this direction in *Le temps des ruines*, pp. 102–05.

⁷² *HP*, I, 22: 'Mirando [...] la crassitudine de questa fragmentata et semiruta structura [...].'

⁷³ *HP*, I, 22–23: '[...] de cognito quali integri fusseron, totalmente privi, et quasi redacti al primo rudimento. [...] Sopra et tra lequale confragose ruine germinati erano molti silvatici virgulti [...].'

⁷⁴ As for example when Poliphilo, confronted with a marble-covered area, assumes that it was either a hippodrome, a colonnade, or an alley. *HP*, I, 32: 'Suscipava de Hippodromo, overo di Xysto [...] overo Ambulacri [...].'

The effect of the intact structures must have been overpowering, Poliphilo presumes, when even the remainders of antiquity are capable of producing such admiration.⁷⁵ In this manner, ruins are indicators of past perfection — and their prominence in the text symptoms of a backwards-facing utopia.⁷⁶

However, ruins are also — and this is central to what follows — fragments in a kind of continuum of the ideal. They disrupt the view of that which is intact, indeed of the artwork as such, for example by drawing the viewer's attention away from the latter towards nature.⁷⁷ Ruins literally impede the observation of the whole when Poliphilo, in the course of his wide-ranging inspection of the site, must climb over and manoeuvre around them to get an unencumbered view of the structure.⁷⁸ And finally, ruins are the location where Poliphilo, frightened by the approach of a dragon, breaks off his investigation and returns to his journey.⁷⁹

Against the background of this fantasy of completion, which served as the core of this first ekphrasis, the ruins can be understood as the indicators which introduce the aspect of time into the atemporal ideality of what is being depicted. This claim can be demonstrated on multiple levels. First of all, the atemporality of the obelisk-pyramid passage is easily demonstrable. The passage is located within the macrostructure of a dream-narration which begins and ends with a description of the emergent dawn, thereby appearing to condense all of the events into a single moment.⁸⁰ The ekphrasis sticks out as an erratic block in the 'terrain' of Poliphilo's wanderings; the narrative lingers there — from the perspective of narrative strategy — far longer than necessary, without advancing the plot forward at all. Finally, within this framework antiquity is in no way understood as historical, even when the text stubbornly insists upon the 'antique nature' of the building. For the product of antiquity is compared with numerous (semi-)mythical examples, whose role is not to contextualize historically the majesty of that which Poliphilo sees but rather to confirm it in its general validity and absoluteness. It is only with the ruins that the disruptive knowledge of a before and after comes into play, implying with decay the

⁷⁵ *HP*, I, 59: 'Si gli fragmenti dilla sancta antiquitate et rupture et ruinamento [...] ne ducono in stupenda admiratione [...] quanto farebbe la sua integritate?'

⁷⁶ Cf. Kruff, *Geschichte der Architektur-Theorie*.

⁷⁷ As from the bottom of *HP*, I, 22 to the top of p. 23, where Poliphilo moves from a description of the ruins to one of the plants and animals emerging between them.

⁷⁸ *HP*, I, 35: '[...] uno agere di ruine scando di grande fracture [...]']

⁷⁹ *HP*, I, 61.

⁸⁰ On this, see *HP*, II, 501, n. 2.

former construction and a future transformation. The ruins become a medium in which past is related to the future to come and historical time can be grasped.

The introduction of time into the ekphrasis by means of the ruins has further effects at the level of narrative, even beyond its significance for historical thinking. It is only once temporally differentiated that the ekphrasis becomes narratively useful; or, put otherwise: only in such a form can the ekphrasis be incorporated into the narrative or functionalized for it. Consequently, it is thus the ruins at the end of the passage that form the point of departure from which the narrative continues. The events are brought back into the course of the love story, while at the same time directed towards a will to meaning, which manifests in the choice of life over death.⁸¹ Thus, in the face of the dragon and his as a whole unhappy existence, Poliphilo rejects the brief thought of a welcome end. He substitutes for it the desire for life, because in it a future union with Polia is possible.⁸²

If one recalls from here Dorothea Schmidt's evaluation of the ekphrases, her judgement that the latter are isolated from the narrative context and allegorical interpretation must be thought anew. It can be shown that, in comparison with the first dream, a specific form of lingering is practiced in the second one. Although this lingering initially threatens to stagnate in the description of timeless, ideal architecture, it then links, through the medialization of time in ruins, the ekphrasis with the narrative environment, making the text's perspective on antiquity productive for the future. Interpretation reveals the meaning

⁸¹ Polia only comes up once in the ekphrasis, and what is more, Poliphilo thinks of her in just the moment in which he is overcome by the sight of the classical structure. He declares that her image always occupies his thoughts, but that he is now for once entirely absorbed in the view of the Classical structure, and that it fills his gaze entirely. He then proceeds to describe the architecture further, without mentioning Polia again (*HP*, I, 31).

⁸² Interesting in this context are the two woodcuts of the passage mentioned, which show ruins or architectural fragments. The first of these is located before the passage in the text where Poliphilo sees the obelisk for the first time. In the foreground of the image, one can see a number of architectural fragments, a torso, a column base and a capital. They are placed in a landscape which Poliphilo is walking through. (*HP*, I, 21) Visible in the background is a wolf, which in the story takes flight before Poliphilo can make up his mind to do so himself. The ruins appear here in just the sense of narrative function described with reference to the ruins at the end of the ekphrasis, in that they bind the ekphrasis into the text's narrative by foreshadowing passages to come. The destroyed column in the second woodcut (otherwise dominated by the representation of the obelisk and pyramid) possesses a different function — namely, less narrative than indicative. The ruin refers here within the image to its before and after, thus creating the historicity of that which is represented.

of human life (affirmed in and by the return to the love story) as one of living-on in breaking through stagnation. This breaking-through can only take place as temporal and thus as historical. As such, the ekphrasis persists, beyond all allegorization of its component parts, as an aspect of allegorical interpretation that deploys historical time as a medium for the creation of meaning.

The (Hi)story of Love

The temporalizing, historicizing function of ruins, demonstrated in the reading of *Hypnerotomachia's* first ekphrasis, will be seen from a new perspective following an analysis of a second passage from the text. This will enable us to examine the operationalizability of the ruin's function. The passage is located towards the end of the narration told from Poliphilo's perspective, just before Polia's narrative within Poliphilo's dream begins. The lovers have been ritually bound together in the temple of Venus. Together, they set out towards the coast to await the arrival of Cupid, who is to take them on his boat to Kythira, the location of their final (corporeal) unification. On the way, they come across the ruins of an ancient building ('veterrimo aedificio'), which Polia identifies as the Polyandriion⁸³ Temple dedicated to Pluto. Formerly a luxurious site of the Pluto cult, where lovers came from all over to offer sacrifice meant to protect against an early death, the temple is now a decaying ruin, a mass grave for countless victims of unhappy love.⁸⁴ Poliphilo feels himself wonderfully educated through Polia's eloquent narration but finds himself in the next moment entirely captivated by her beauty. What follows is a sort of ekphrasis of her face and body, fanning the flames of Poliphilo's desire until he can no longer bear it.⁸⁵ His thoughts are directed obsessively towards fulfilling his desire to possess Polia.⁸⁶ Poliphilo is saved from this state of immense internal division (which brings him to the cusp of deciding to satisfy his desire with violence) by Polia's suggestion that he take a closer look at the temple, while she remains behind to keep watch for Cupid. Making use of her knowledge of Poliphilo's

⁸³ The Greek πολυάνδριον means 'communal burial site'.

⁸⁴ *HP*, I, 236–38.

⁸⁵ We can see here forms of concentration, curiosity for details and dedication to the object similar to the description of the building in the first ekphrasis. However, the focus here lies more on Poliphilo's astonishment and admiration, as well as his corporeal reaction to what he sees.

⁸⁶ *HP*, I, 239–42.

enthusiasm for works of antiquity, she encourages him to set out immediately upon a sightseeing trip of the temple.⁸⁷

In what follows, Poliphilo channels the entirety of his inappropriate desire into the attentive exploration of the temple.⁸⁸ It is clear from the beginning that Poliphilo's activity is one of decryption — deductions made from the remaining evidence as well as interpretations from parts toward their whole.⁸⁹ In contrast to the first ekphrasis, what Poliphilo performs here is strictly a reading in and of fragments.⁹⁰ This culminates in the nearly excessive reading of the epitaphs of deceased lovers, in stories of misfortune and corruption. Poliphilo lingers with these stories, occasionally unable to completely understand their contents as a result of the dilapidated status of the gravestones.⁹¹

What is particularly surprising here, in light of the shifts relative to the first ekphrasis, is that this passage too, despite its thematic relevance to the *Hypnerotomachia*'s primary narrative strand, nonetheless gives the impression of an isolated narrative unit. Admittedly, observation and mere seeing, which played such decisive roles in the first passage, recede into the background, while the tragic love stories are well equipped to move⁹² or even unsettle the read-

⁸⁷ *HP*, I, 242: 'Poliphile di tutti amantissimo mio gia mai non son ignara, che le antiquarie ope[re] ad te summamente piacerono di vedere' (Poliphilo, my best-beloved, I am well aware that you are extremely fond of looking at the works of antiquity). Poliphilo says of his departure that it occurred 'without another thought': '[...] sencia altro cogitare absorto [...]' and he also brings the new works into a relationship with those he has already seen: 'io grandemente avidissimo, cum aliter commendatissime opere viderem, etiam queste accuratissimo et multivido di contemplare' (After the other wonderful works I had seen, I was greatly eager for a careful and perceptive examination of these).

⁸⁸ See also in relation to this passage Furno's detailed investigation of the treatment of antiquity in the *Hypnerotomachia*: Furno, *Une 'Fantasie' sur l'antique*. However, the argument there proceeds primarily on the basis of a 'mental antiquity' founded upon the principle of *accomodatio* visible at various levels.

⁸⁹ Poliphilo's first reaction upon catching sight of the temple is the assumption of its former grandeur and majesty. *HP*, I, 242: '[...] coniecturai questo essere stato magnifico'. He deduces from pieces of stone tribunes the former location of graves (*HP*, I, 243: 'Per la disposizione dillequale tribune [...] iudicai, che in quelle locati fusseron gli sepulchri'), and interprets an inscription on an obelisk (*HP*, I, 243: '[...] gliquali cusi io li interpreterai').

⁹⁰ Once again, the woodcut at the beginning of the passage is instructive (*HP*, I, 238). Depicted there is the temple *as* ruin. In the image too it is clear that the status of the ruin here is different from its status in the first ekphrasis — and thus that a different strategy on the part of the protagonist must be associated with it.

⁹¹ *HP*, I, 252–71.

⁹² *HP*, I, 270.

er.⁹³ On the whole, however, the overriding factor is the pleasure that Poliphilo draws from his observation.⁹⁴ It becomes clear that all of his efforts are directed towards the accumulation of objects for his visual curiosity. His discoveries produce the desire for more discoveries.⁹⁵ This is a manner of lingering, which accumulates narrations, without however possessing consequences for the continuation of Poliphilo's own story.

Poliphilo's curiosity remains undisturbed up to the moment in which the scope of the story of the abduction and rape of Proserpine forces its way into his consciousness. Seen on a half-destroyed mural painting, Poliphilo is first annoyed only that he cannot marvel at the work in its totality. But suddenly, a 'horrible thought enters into his loving heart'.⁹⁶ The fate of Proserpine causes him to revert back from 'archaeologist' to lover, linking his own story with the one that he has read out of the ruins. This then casts (for Poliphilo) a different light upon his expedition into the ruins of the past, for it has drawn him away from Polia's side and exposed her to the risk of abduction.⁹⁷ Propelled by sudden concern, Poliphilo swiftly turns away, 'lasciando tanto incocepto nobile, et praeclara inquisition et laudabunda lustratione, et virtuososolacio' ([abandoning] this noble and meaningful search, this praiseworthy pilgrimage and learned respite).⁹⁸ Despite Poliphilo's evident concern, one

⁹³ *HP*, I, 257. Here, Poliphilo even undertakes some translation work, translating the story from Greek into Latin.

⁹⁴ Again and again we read that Poliphilo turns with great enjoyment from one work to the next, whereby enjoyment and pleasure seem to rise alongside the number of objects seen: 'Relicto questo che cum summa laetitia vidi, intrai in una tribuna' (*HP*, I, 256); 'De qui partito me piu avidamente lustrando per le acervate ruine, trovai un altra ara [...]' (*HP*, I, 259), etc.

⁹⁵ *HP*, I, 260: 'Cum maxima delectatione et piacere questi spectandi fragmenti mirando avido piu anchora indagante altro di novo trovare' (Admiring these beautiful fragments with much delight and pleasure, I was still avid to search out new finds).

⁹⁶ *HP*, I, 272: 'Per tanto non poca displicentia me invase, per non potere lo partuta ingegramente mirare [...]. Considerando dunque il violentario modo, che repente surrepta fue Proserpina, uno subitaneo et tristo pensiero nel amante core dicio feramente me percosse dicendo [...]' (I was not a little annoyed at being unable to admire the work in its entirety [...]. But as I thought about the violent manner in which Proserpina had been rapidly abducted, a sudden dire thought struck me cruelly in my loving heart and I said [...]).

⁹⁷ *HP*, I, 272: 'O importuna indagine, et effrena curiositate dille cose pterite, et di saxi fresi di squirente, ad che son divoluto!' (Oh, how importunate is my research and unbridled curiosity about things of the past, my quest for these broken stones that I have been pondering, where have I gone?).

⁹⁸ *HP*, I, 273.

almost senses in this formulation a certain regret regarding the interruption of Poliphilo's tour through antiquity. Panicked, Poliphilo runs through brush and 'avie ruine' (pathless ruins) back to the shore, finally arriving 'half dead' ('non tuto vivo ma semi mortuo') back at Polia. Under her care, life flows back into his limbs.⁹⁹

The ruins passage, as becomes clear at its conclusion, outfits Poliphilo and Polia's love with a history, and it introduces into Poliphilo's desire (previously fixed on untimely fulfilment) the moment of *cairos*, which lies in the future. To that end the narrative lingers with the past torments of lovers,¹⁰⁰ which must be read out of the ruins and interpreted in order to deploy the full scope of its effects. At stake in this scene is the growth of knowledge through interpretation, which Poliphilo achieves. As in the first ekphrasis, ruins are linked here to temporalization and historicization. However, this time the focus has shifted. The first instance showed that an idealized antiquity only acquires a function after being outfitted with a temporal and historical index (and thus can only then develop meaning). The focus of the second, however, is more on the manner of the reception of antiquity through the medium of ruins—and thus upon a process of reading, which at its conclusion leads to the recognition of the historicity of one's own (hi)story. At the point when Poliphilo recognizes the connection between the decrypted fate and his own, the latter finds a continuation; its conclusion, along with that of Poliphilo's life, is deferred, postponed to the right moment.

Conclusion

The *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, long scorned by reception as an inaccessible riddle, had an impact on the second half of the fifteenth century unparalleled in the context of the reception of antiquity.¹⁰¹ From this perspective, Grassi's wish to pass on knowledge was fulfilled, although less in the literary sense he suggested than with respect to the images.

In the preceding, I have attempted to conceive of the basic tension of the *Hypnerotomachia*, in the sense of Grassi's dedication but also that of the work's title, as a problem of the increase of knowledge. A central role was accorded

⁹⁹ *HP*, I, 273–74.

¹⁰⁰ Decisive here is that in the clear majority of cases, these stories refer to historical figures, even if the final story, that of Proserpina (which contributes to Poliphilo's realization), is a myth.

¹⁰¹ See Forero-Mendoza, *Le temps des ruines*, pp. 102–15.

to the question of how meaning can increase with knowledge — a knowledge that, in the context of the *Hypnerotomachia*, defies the general insignificance of human life. From this perspective, the central question was revealed to be that of the connection between textual interpretation and processes for the creation of meaning — a question suggested by the novel's beginning and the elegy, which precedes it. Forms of lingering analysed here showed the conditions of stagnation and the failure of interpretation, while the investigation of two ekphrases of antique structures, located at key places in the text, documented the success of interpretation. This success was measured by two distinct but ultimately related forms of the medialization of time in the representation of ruins. These introduced historicity into a state elevated out of the narrative, thus making this state usable for allegorical interpretation towards meaning. This meaning then emerged as nothing less than living on.

In this new direction of allegorical interpretation, one finds that which could be termed the *Hypnerotomachia*'s potential to become the key novel of the late Middle Ages: significant not as a document of architectural theory, but rather as a manifesto of hermeneutic transformation.

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